11TH EUROPEAN COMMUNICATION CONFERENCE

ECREA 2026

SHIFTING GROUNDS

PATHS
CONNECTIONS
AND FUTURES

ABSTRACT BOOK

8–11 SEPTEMBER 2026
BRNO, CZECH REPUBLIC

ISBN: 978-80-909294-5-6
Title: ECC26 – Electronic Book of Abstracts
The 11th European Communication Conference, 8–11 September 2026,
Brno, Czech Republic
Publisher: CZECH-IN s. r. o. 140 00 Prague 4, Czech Republic
Issued September 2026
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PL01 Roundtable Keynote Day 1

Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures

Sandra Banjac (Netherlands), Emilija Gagrcin (Germany), Michael Bossetta (Sweden)

Communication research stands on shifting grounds. As the systems we study continue to transform, so do the conceptual models, methods, and priorities that define our field.

This opening plenary takes the ECC26 theme—Paths, Connections, and Futures—as an invitation to reflect on communication as a discipline. Rather than offering three separate speeches, the session unfolds cumulatively across three thematic rounds.

In the first round, Paths, we ask: What choices are shaping our field right now? Which theoretical approaches, methodological directions, and institutional pressures are defining communication research today? What do these choices enable, and what do they constrain?

In the second round, Connections, we turn to the relational question: What connects across technologies, disciplines, and societies? How does communication research build bridges across intellectual, political, and social fragmentation? What forms of explanation, critique, and collaboration endure across periods of transformation?

In the final round, Futures, we ask: What should we take into the future? What forms of research, responsibility, and imagination are necessary for communication scholarship to remain relevant, rigorous, and societally meaningful in uncertain times?

Each round begins with short provocations from the panelists, each framed by a single keyword capturing a central claim. As the session progresses, these keywords build a conceptual map that makes visible the paths we are taking, the connections we are building, and the futures we are collectively shaping. Audience interaction extends this mapping exercise, inviting participants to reflect on the commitments and connections they believe should guide communication in the years ahead.

By structuring the plenary around cumulative reflection rather than isolated commentary, the session seeks to embody what the conference theme calls for: clarity in our intellectual choices, openness in our perspectives, and shared responsibility in shaping the futures we design.

PL02 Keynote Lecture Day 2

KL 01 Exemplary Journalistic Actors: What Can the Core Learn from the Exemplary

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Journalism is changing, the grounds are shifting, but one thing remains the same: the power – the lust for power among various journalistic actors; and power struggles, not only at the margins of the journalistic field, but also within it. Similarly, power is present in journalism studies research, too – we also have our core and periphery – but we don't discuss it loudly. However, this power curtain in both practice and research should not make us blind or keep us quiet. On the contrary, we should actively observe who holds the power, identify it, challenge it: by paying attention not only to those in the core of the field(s), but also (and above all) to those on the periphery. Although power may seem to limit our options as researchers, we should not view the periphery of both the journalistic field and journalism studies research as marginal. On the contrary, we should recognise its potential to enrich the knowledge – through inclusive approach and diverse perspectives. In this context, we can consider peripheral actors to include not only those on the geographical margins, but also those on the margins of the field, such as local journalists, editors, camera reporters, journalists from less prominent beats, or x-journalists. While these journalistic actors are considered peripheral, we can regard them as exemplary. Exemplary is a suitable term that reflects a shift in perspective, allowing peripheral actors and their practices to be brought to the forefront – not only to acknowledge their importance in the journalistic field, but also to emancipate both the best practices and the pitfalls it entails. Conveniently, exemplary, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, means both setting a good example as well as serving as a warning to others, thus can cover the entire spectrum of (non)transferable experiences. In order to learn from those on the margins and being able to expand our knowledge to the core, we can follow the conference's paths–connections–futures framework. Not only are there paths leading to more inclusive research: considering structural conditions, we can ask, how journalistic and academic ecologies shape what knowledge becomes visible and even influential. There is also the path-dependency – when it comes to peripheral journalistic actors, we must look both ways – to the future and to the past, building on the existing body of knowledge in the field. We don't need to "reinvent the wheel", the exemplary actors have always been in the field. Considering connections, we should finally replace a ford with a bridge, moving beyond mere declarations about inclusive research and topic equality – first acknowledging the underrepresented voices in journalism and journalism studies; and second contribute to their amplification. Peripherality is an analytic resource, not a disadvantage. This approach can shift the grounds in journalism research, with futures based on emancipating marginalised actors and topics, thereby contributing to the resilience of the journalistic profession and scholarship. Therefore, we can consider

what the future of academia might look like if the peripheral actors also meaningfully shape knowledge. An interactive and entertaining keynote lecture will present data from research into exemplary actors in journalism, which will support and illustrate the above arguments. For example, it will showcase the exemplary entrepreneurial practices of local journalists, whose decades of experience can teach us about resilience under constraints.

PL02 Keynote Lecture Day 2

KL 02 The price of democracy: How digital platforms make illiberalism cheap

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Democratic erosion represents one of the most pressing challenges facing liberal democracies, yet the role of political communication in facilitating this process remains undertheorized. This presentation will develop a conceptual framework of communicative democratic erosion explaining how transformations in political information environments (PIEs) have fundamentally altered the 'price' of pursuing illiberal strategies—making what was once prohibitively costly increasingly cheap and accessible. Our framework conceptualizes PIE changes—digitalization, platform dominance, fragmentation, and algorithmic curation—as opportunity structures that reduce three types of costs. First, digital platforms lower entry costs by enabling illiberal actors to bypass traditional gatekeepers and reach mass audiences directly. Second, algorithmic amplification and elite norm-violation signaling reduce social costs of expressing previously stigmatized illiberal views. Third, media capture weakens institutional costs by diminishing independent journalism's capacity to impose reputational sanctions. These cost-reduction mechanisms operate through four interconnected elements: (1) structural PIE transformations create new opportunity structures; (2) elites strategically exploit reduced entry costs; (3) citizens respond through pathways that activate intolerance or deactivate democratic engagement; (4) mainstream media normalize illiberal discourse, creating conditions for institutional capture. Captured media feed back into PIE fragmentation, creating cost spirals that accelerate erosion. Cross-national variation reflects three scope conditions—media system structure, regulatory capacity, and elite restraint—that determine whether platforms' cost-reducing effects translate into democratic decline. Our framework, developed through collaborative analysis by the Network of European Political Communication Scholars (Nepocs), bridges political communication and democracy studies while identifying actionable intervention points for restoring the costs that protect democracy.

SP01 The Impact of Technologies on Well-Being

SP 01 Measuring the benefits and drawbacks of ubiquitous connectivity: The digital well-being scale

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Digital well-being is an emerging concept that refers to the balance that individuals experience between the benefits and the drawbacks of ubiquitous connectivity. Definitions of Digital Well-being vary, leading to a variety of operationalizations, yet none match closely with the definition of digital well-being as a subjective experience of the benefits and drawbacks of ubiquitous connectivity. Hence, we performed a preregistered study (N = 1438) testing a Digital Well-being Scale to measure this subjective experience. The psychometric analysis of the scale revealed a second-order two-factor structure, with perceived benefits (hedonic and eudaimonic) and perceived drawbacks from smartphone use (loss of control and functional impairment) as separate dimensions. These dimensions formed internally consistent subscales. The findings of this study thus point towards the Digital Well-being scale as useful measurement tool for assessing the benefits and drawbacks that individuals experience from using digital technologies, that can be integrated in future research examining the antecedents, correlates, and outcomes of digital well-being.

SP01 The Impact of Technologies on Well-Being

SP 02 Does smartphone application use impact adolescents' affect? Or vice versa? An experience sampling study

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Adolescents spend substantial time on smartphones, often engaging with social and entertainment applications. While mood management theories suggest that media use can be linked to the regulation of affect, empirical findings remain mixed, and often rely on self-reports and unidirectional assumptions. This study advances theory and methodology by examining the short-term associations between social networking and entertainment application use and affective states, and vice versa, using experience sampling and trace data. A sample of 197 Czech adolescents participated in four two-week bursts of data collection, during which smartphone use was logged and affective states were assessed multiple times daily. While we found that application use was related to affective states at the between-person level, these findings did not consistently translate to individual-level dynamics. At the within-person level, increased social application use was followed by slightly higher negative and lower positive affect, while an increase in positive affect predicted a small decrease in entertainment application use. Our results provide partial support for some pathways in mood management theory among certain adolescents. Our results imply that public concerns about the severe harms of smartphone use to short-term psychological well-being may be overstated.

SP01 The Impact of Technologies on Well-Being

SP 03 Does social media time matter for adolescents? Exploring reciprocal relationships between time on social media and social well-being and ill-being

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Social media (SM) platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are deeply embedded in the daily and social lives of adolescents, yet research remains inconclusive about whether SM use benefits, harms, or has no effect on adolescents' social well-being. While the Displacement and Stimulation Hypotheses predict opposite effects of SM use on social outcomes, the Social Compensation and Social Enhancement Hypotheses suggest that feelings of loneliness or social support may in turn influence time spent on social media (TSSM). This study examines the long-term reciprocal relationship between time spent on social media (TSSM), peer support, and loneliness—two key indicators of social well-being and ill-being—using a random-intercept cross-lagged panel model (RI-CLPM). The analysis draws on a large, nationally representative, quota-based sample of Czech adolescents (N = 2,500; ages 11–16; 50% female) surveyed across three waves. Results indicate that TSSM has no significant long-term effect on adolescents' peer support or loneliness. In other words, TSSM neither displaces nor stimulates adolescents' social connections. These findings suggest that interventions focused solely on limiting TSSM are unlikely to improve adolescents' social well-being or reduce loneliness. Instead, broader strategies that address underlying social and emotional needs are warranted.

SP01 The Impact of Technologies on Well-Being

SP 04 Modifiable media-related factors of sleep health in Czech adolescents: Findings from a nationally representative study

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Media-related factors capture contextual conditions of media use rather than time spent on media activities. Many are modifiable and may contribute to improvements in adolescent sleep. Identifying the factors most strongly associated with sleep can inform parental guidance and interventions. However, evidence remains limited, with most studies focusing on single factors or only one level of influence. To address this gap, the present study examined the relative contributions of multiple media-related factors at individual and family levels to adolescent sleep health, accounting for their co-occurrence, and controlling for age, sex, bedroom sharing, and screen time. Data were drawn from a nationally representative sample of Czech adolescents (N = 2,500; aged 11–16) and their caregivers. Phone use during sleep hours was negatively associated with sufficient sleep duration (OR = 0.75, 95% CI [0.68, 0.83]) and sleep quality (β =-0.16, 95% CI [-0.21,-0.11]), and positively associated with daytime sleepiness (β = 0.31, 95% CI [0.26, 0.35]). Keeping smartphones out of reach during sleep was positively associated with sleep quality (β = 0.06, 95% CI [0.01, 0.11]). Parental rules on evening phone use were positively associated with sufficient sleep duration (OR = 1.12, 95% CI [1.02, 1.24]) and sleep quality (β = 0.12, 95% CI [0.07, 0.18]). Adolescent phone autonomy was negatively associated with sufficient sleep duration (OR = 0.76, 95% CI [0.67, 0.85]). Technical mediation of computer use was negatively associated with sleep quality (β =-0.06, 95% CI [-0.11,-0.00]). Other factors were not associated with sleep outcomes. Findings suggest that parental guidance and interventions should prioritize reducing phone use during sleep hours, the most consistent correlate of adolescent sleep health, though reverse causality cannot be ruled out, and more broadly focus on individual-level factors, which accounted for more variance than family-level factors.

SP01 The Impact of Technologies on Well-Being

SP 05 Understanding effects of digital media on wellbeing: Advancing theory through interventions and health frameworks

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Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become deeply embedded in adolescents' everyday lives. They shape adolescents' development, social relationships, and well-being in ways that require continuously updated theoretical frameworks. This presentation introduces the Integrative Model of ICT Effects on Adolescents' Well-being (iMEW; Smahel et al., 2022), which integrates the Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013), Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor, 2014), and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1977). The iMEW conceptualizes adolescents' well-being as a multidimensional construct encompassing psychological, social, and physical dimensions, and explains how digital media use relates to well-being through differential susceptibility variables operating at individual, social, and country levels. While the iMEW has advanced our understanding of how digital media use relates to adolescents' well-being, the field is now confronted with growing public and policy demands for evidence-based interventions promoting healthier digital media use. Intervention research is essential to provide causal answers to questions such as which interventions effectively support adolescents' well-being and what the effects of restrictive measures, such as school mobile phone bans, actually are. However, existing media effects theories provide little insight into the underlying mechanisms of media-related interventions, that is, into who benefits from interventions, under what conditions they are effective, and which processes drive sustainable behavioral change (Vanden Abeele et al., 2025). To address this gap, in this presentation we propose a direction for future theoretical work: enriching the iMEW with health behavior change frameworks, namely the Health Action Process Approach (HAPA; Schwarzer, 2008) and the Temporal Self-Regulation Theory (TST; Hall & Fong, 2007). We propose first theoretical ideas related to this integration and outline how it could be further elaborated and tested in upcoming research projects. Integrating these frameworks within media effects theories would enable the model to account for factors shaping interventions and to support the design of theory-driven interventions across adolescents, parents, and schools.

SP03 Paths and Connections That Outline the Future for Media – Some International Perspectives (IAMCR)

SP 06 Evolution or involution in public service media? Some reflections about recent changes in Spain, France and Sweden

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The role of European Public Service Media (PSM) has inevitably changed, be it slightly or drastically, in the last decades. However, the image of PSM has different perspectives according to the governing party of each specific country, as far-right governments have increased within Europe. Populist parties have traditionally opposed public service media (Holtz-Bacha, 2021), and in some cases, this is clearly manifested in the role of the opposition party, as it happens nowadays in the case of Sweden (Arriaza Ibarra & Wadbring, 2025). In Southern Europe there are other EU states where a strong, long-time tradition of public service media and public service mission have been suffering so many transformations from their respective government attempts to modify them, that it is hardly recognisable anymore as the media connected to the citizens and open to diversity and pluralism of opinions and news, as it happens today in France. Spain, on the other hand, is struggling since many years ago to legitimise a public broadcaster that has gone down in audiences and receives criticism for its reiterative role of acting as a 'a propaganda tool' for the ruling political party (Arriaza Ibarra, 2013). This presentation revises the latest changes in PSM in Spain, France and Sweden to reflect on the way they have come closer or even all the contrary, distanced themselves, from their original missions and their proximity to citizens, and in which way these initially public mission companies are changing.

Keywords

Public Service Media, Spain, France, Sweden, transformations

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SP03 Paths and Connections That Outline the Future for Media – Some International Perspectives (IAMCR)

SP 07 Understanding digital well-being in international contexts: A comparative approach

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As a normative concept, "digital well-being" emerged from the global "tech backlash" movement, which targets digital platforms for regulation. However, through a series of technological solutionist and neoliberal discourses, coupled with market practices, platform companies have reshaped the meaning of digital well-being, steering it toward a narrowly utilitarian understanding confined to the individual. This shift has epistemologically and methodologically narrowed its public imaginary. Drawing on the critical perspective of the political economy of communication, this article examines the ambiguous relationship between digital platforms and the industrialization of artificial intelligence. It argues that digital platforms have established a global computational hegemony by monopolizing core production factors, including data, algorithms, computing power, and labor. The threefold inequalities in data production and consumption, the allocation of computing resources, and the mobility of high-skilled labor constitute the root causes of the challenges surrounding digital well-being. More importantly, by analyzing the role of platforms in defining digital well-being from an international perspective, the article indicates that although the United States, the European Union, and China share a common emphasis on strengthening government regulation of platforms, differences in their social systems shape divergent connotations and pathways for realizing digital well-being. At the same time, practices of digital well-being in Global South countries, rooted in their specific social contexts, offer a pluralistic vision that transcends data-centrism, promoting a bottom-up, context-specific approach to enhancement. The perspective of the political economy of communication re-reveals the power dynamics underlying digital well-being and calls for vigilance against new forms of power domination and discipline.

Keywords

Digital Well-being, digital platform, political economy of communication, comparative studies

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SP03 Paths and Connections That Outline the Future for Media – Some International Perspectives (IAMCR)

SP 08 Media trust and connections in times of uncertainty

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Trust in news media is seen as an essential part of media ecosystem in societies. While the position of legacy news media has transformed in recent years, it still has connecting power by providing a shared platform of information. This presentation provides a case study of Finland, one of the Nordic countries which are known for a high level of news readership but at the same time for a high degree of digitalization and internet use. Both phenomena express connections, brough by communication. In this context, I'll in this presentation explore the position of news media in times of transformation and different uncertainties. According to Reuters Institute reports, people in Finland see news institutions very trustworthy: the latest report informs that 75 per cent of the Finnish respondents say that they trust most news they follow and 67 per cent believe that most news can be trusted (Newman et al., 2025). These numbers are the highest in the countries studied for the report, even though even in Finland there are challenges of the traditional business model of journalism and changes in news consumption habits. This presentation looks at different dimensions of media trust amidst these challenges. The concept of trust is here understood to be near the concepts of credibility and reliability (e.g. Fischer et al., 2020). Using data from surveys among both media professionals and audiences, it is possible to compare the views. It is also important to understand the impact of demographic and sociographic factors. The surveys show, for example, some indications of polarization and audience's concerns about disinformation, but at the same time rather firm leaning on the professionalism of legacy media (see e.g. Horowitz et al., 2024). Also, the impact of artificial intelligence needs to be taken into account when discussing the media trust.

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SP03 Paths and Connections That Outline the Future for Media – Some International Perspectives (IAMCR)

SP 09 Community media as Civic hub: Responding to critical junctures

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The media scholar Robert McChesney (2007) saw critical junctures as moments of possibility, generated by the conjunction of technological change, a crisis of legitimacy in media content, and dissension among elites. This paper will offer insights from the community media sector and its responses to contemporary challenges, arguing that the critical juncture we currently face in media (and society more broadly) opens up opportunities for radical change that learn from that sector's experiences. Community media are often characterised by conditions of precarity and marginality. It is, paradoxically, often this very uncertainty that builds resilience, as the sector relies on a form of regulatory and technological arbitrage to survive and thrive, finding and leveraging the opportunities that arise from systems that were not designed with the sector in mind, and contributing to goals of community development. This contribution explores the ways in which the community media sector is responding to contemporary challenges, including the advent of AI, the rise of neo-fascist politics, and the related crises in communication and trust. Longstanding traditions within the sector of techno-scepticism and pragmatic approaches to technological adoption have a wider salience as society grapples with the potential and peril of generative-AI. Similarly, there is an intrinsic potential to contribute to both critical media literacy and a broader civic resilience. The potential for community media outlets to act as civic hubs is laid out, offering one particular bulwark against the challenges of technological change and political polarisation. In particular, the experience of the Irish community media

sector as it engages in a process of digital transformation is teased out, identifying both possible paths as well as barriers and constraints. This case study is complemented by insights from other systems.

SP03 Paths and Connections That Outline the Future for Media – Some International Perspectives (IAMCR)

SP 10 Why talk about alleged crowding out? The reality of evidence-averse public service media policy-making

Manuel Puppis[1]

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The online news offers of public service media (PSM) are contested across Europe, sparking debates about the remit and funding of PSM in digitalized societies. Private media companies argue that freely accessible PSM news reduces audiences' willingness-to-pay for commercial journalism by crowding out private providers. Empirical evidence for those effects remains limited. Studies addressing online news consumption generally find no crowding-out effects (e.g., Fletcher & Nielsen, 2017; Sehl et al., 2020; Udris et al., 2024a), but they largely rely on survey data. This study thus combined a representative survey with a choice-based conjoint (CBC) analysis to examine how "SRF News", the online news offer of Switzerland's German-language PSM, affects the digital news market. While the survey measured self-reported news use and WTP for online journalism, the CBC simulations modelled how market shares would be redistributed if "SRF News" was discontinued. Results show that providers of free news websites would benefit most from discontinuing "SRF News". In contrast, paid newspaper subscriptions would increase only modestly even at price levels substantially below current market prices[PM1.1]. Evidently, the limited success of digital subscriptions is primarily driven by the widespread availability of free commercial online news offers rather than by competition from PSM. The evidence is clear – yet policymakers in various media systems aim to impose additional restrictions on PSM's online news offers. As many private media organizations reject the existing evidence, they lobby for policies that are doubtful to help their own industry and will likely diminish overall reach of quality journalism. Presenter: Manuel Puppis Co-Authors: Lukas Erbrich, Sina Blassnig, Christian Zabel, Frank Lobigs

Keywords

media policy, public service media, crowding out, evidence-based policy-making

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SP07 From Knowledge Commons to Institutional Decay: How Can Academics Still Act Collectively Under Competitive Capitalism?

SP 14 Structural transformation of the university

Phoebe Maares[1]

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This contribution maps the structural shift from university as knowledge commons to university as competitive enterprise and asks how extractive governance models reshape academic subjectivities, normalizing compliance and passivity.

SP07 From Knowledge Commons to Institutional Decay: How Can Academics Still Act Collectively Under Competitive Capitalism?

SP 15 Precarity as discipline

Nivedita Chatterjje[1]

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This contribution examines how early-career precarity functions as a structural disciplining mechanism within neoliberal academia and asks whether collective agency can emerge from academic subjects trained to be compliant on the one hand and entrepreneurial competitors on the other.

SP07 From Knowledge Commons to Institutional Decay: How Can Academics Still Act Collectively Under Competitive Capitalism?

SP 16 Academics' Political Leverage

Ioan Suhov[1]

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This contribution interrogates whether early-career academics can develop shared narratives, solidarities, and communicative strategies that counterbalance competition and foster collective agency. By situating these questions within contemporary European governance structures and fragmented academic systems, it ultimately considers what forms of coordination, reflexivity, and alternative mobilization practices might strengthen young voices from the bottom up.

SP07 From Knowledge Commons to Institutional Decay: How Can Academics Still Act Collectively Under Competitive Capitalism?

SP 17 Rebuilding collective capacity

Maria Kyriakidou[1]

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This contribution turns to concrete experiments in rebuilding collective capacity, including recent strike movements and union mobilizations in the UK and explores alternative institutional arrangements that might restore collective bargaining power.

ARS02 Emotions, Affect And Engagement With Crisis

PP 0001 Protecting wellbeing, narrowing citizenship: A taxonomy of coping tactics for perceived news toxicity

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More citizens perceive the news landscape as toxic, illustrated by an uptick in news avoidance, an increase in news fatigue, and an erosion of trust in journalism (Newman et al., 2025). Although this perceived 'toxicity' remains under-defined, we build on prior work and treat toxicity as an experience of harm to emotional wellbeing (Mathews et al., 2022) and operationalise 'toxic news' as news experienced as intrusive, unreliable, or divisive (Picone and Truyens, forthcoming). Many citizens have narrowed their news repertoires to cope with this perceived toxicity (Truyens et al., forthcoming).

These observations made us wonder how coping with perceived toxicity enables or hinders public connection, defined as "an orientation to any of those issues affecting how we live together that require common resolution" (Couldry et al., 2007). In the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2017), citizens distribute public connection across multiple arenas (Moe, 2023), which may reduce the likelihood that civic 'alarm signals' are heard equally across groups.

The research questions guiding our study are: RQ1. Which tactics do citizens use to cope with perceptions of toxicity? RQ2. Which coping tactics enable or hinder public connection (by broadening versus narrowing issue attention and civic monitoring)?

To answer our research questions, we set up a three-phase qualitative study in Flanders and Ireland. First, we conducted interviews with 52 citizens on their media and news use, feelings and experiences of news, and tactics to cope with negative experiences, i.e., perceived 'toxicity'. Second, we asked those relying predominantly on social media for their news intake to donate this data (n = 10). We relied on the 'Data Mirroring' protocol (Jurg et al., 2025) to visualise news flows on participants' main social media platforms. In a follow-up interview, we used these news flows to reflect with the participants on tactics they integrated in their news practices to cope with perceptions of toxicity. We then developed a taxonomy of coping tactics through reflexive thematic analysis (Clarke and Braun, 2014). Third, we conducted four citizen labs with a diverse sample of citizens (n = 60), using scenario-based exercises and collective reflection to assess the usability of, and willingness to adopt, the identified coping tactics in news routines.

The research design enabled us to structure our taxonomy in coping tactics that enable citizens' public connection or hinder it. Moreover, preliminary findings indicate subgroups of citizens, those lower-educated and/or younger, predominantly rely on a repertoire of tactics narrowing down their already limited public connection.

A field of tension arises between coping with toxicity to protect wellbeing and coping in a way that maintains a level of public connection. The need to cope with toxic news on these platforms can lead citizens away from news, illustrated by news-avoidant-tactics such as unfollowing news accounts and avoiding discussions on news. Moreover, these tactics reallocate civic monitoring from journalism toward platforms and interpersonal networks, reshaping who receives, and who misses, civic 'alarm signals' at the expense of others.

ARS02 Emotions, Affect And Engagement With Crisis

PP 0002 'So emotional!'. The role of emotions for young adults' resilience to disinformation

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The combination of heightened emotions and polluted information environments accompanying current political, technological, and socio-economic transformations complicates truth assessments of circulating claims and narratives. This provides fertile ground for the proliferation of disinformation. While the role of emotions in shaping disinformation beliefs and sharing is widely acknowledged, there is little empirical evidence on the underlying mechanisms. Existing research on the influence of emotions, such as anxiety and anger, presents conflicting findings (Oh & Lee, 2019; Weeks, 2015), underscoring the need for a more comprehensive understanding. This paper, therefore, asks how and under what circumstances emotions impact resilience to disinformation.

To provide an in-depth understanding, we applied a qualitative study design, conducting 29 semi-structured interviews with young adults (18–32) in Germany and the Netherlands. Based on day-in-the-life narrations and in situ social media walkthroughs, our study outlines the context in which specific emotions arise when individuals encounter potential disinformation, connected behaviors, and the consequences for resilience to disinformation.

We find that emotions of positive valence, such as feeling calm and confident, are linked to verification behaviors and can indicate and reinforce resilience to disinformation. Contrary to existing research, we find that emotions of negative valence, such as anger, discontent, and disappointment, can also be signifiers of resilience. They mainly appear with behavior such as critical information evaluation of media reporting, signaling participants' dissatisfaction with content. However, the

intensity of emotions matters, as strong negative emotions are linked to resignation, distrust in democratic institutions, and disinformation beliefs.

Our study shows how emotional responses shape and are shaped by behavior and knowledge. Identifying this reciprocal process advances the theorization of resilience to disinformation by introducing the emotional dimension and integrating interactive dynamics. This has implications for existing and future empirical research, highlighting the limitations of practical but reductionist linear approaches. Emotions are often implicitly approached as factors contributing to disinformation beliefs, best minimized not to impede rational assessments of information. Our findings offer an alternative perspective, viewing them as an integral part of resilience processes. In addition to opening novel venues for research, this provides opportunities to improve existing interventions aimed at increasing people's resilience to disinformation.

Keywords

Disinformation, resilience, emotion, cross-national, young people

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ARS02 Emotions, Affect And Engagement With Crisis

PP 0003 Feeling climate: How emotional responses to data visualisation shape political engagement

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The visual communication of data has risen significantly in recent years. Data visualisations are increasingly people's primary source of information about complex social issues, shaping understanding and potentially guiding everyday decisions. Despite their ubiquity, the affective and political dimensions of data visualisations remain largely underexplored in media research. While prior work has examined how data visualisations enhance comprehension, shape public discourse, and evoke emotions, less attention has been paid to the role of these emotional responses in shaping political engagement. Similarly, although literature on data visualisation and democracy highlights its potential to foster political engagement and support civic activities, the affective dimensions of such engagement remain under-theorised and under-researched. This study is therefore the first to empirically examine, from the audiences' perspective, how emotional responses to data visualisations encountered on social media influence different forms of political engagement, from online sharing to more formal offline political actions. The paper focuses on climate data visualisation as a particularly urgent and emotionally charged domain within a visually oriented social media ecosystem. To investigate how diverse users respond to climate data visualisations, the research was conducted in two contrasting national settings, Poland and the United Kingdom, chosen for their distinct political, environmental, and media cultures surrounding climate change. This comparative approach enabled an examination of how localised discourses, historical trajectories, and environmental politics shape emotional responses to climate data visualisations, while simultaneously decentring dominant Western perspectives in data studies. Drawing on 34 semi-structured interviews and 13 follow-up interviews with social media users from the UK (N = 18) and Poland (N = 16), the research investigates responses to 13 climate data visualisations shared on social media by six environmental organisations: Greenpeace (UK/Poland), WWF (UK/Poland), Carbon Brief (UK), and Nauka o klimacie (Poland). The visualisations were purposively selected to capture a diverse range of visual forms, design styles, and climate-related themes circulating online. The interview discussions were structured around these examples. The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach. The findings show that different emotional valences—positive, negative, and ambivalent—towards data visualisations correspond to distinct modes of political engagement: (a) sharing and discussing data visualisation with others, (b) changes in everyday practices, and (c) more formal political actions. I argue that although engagement with data visualisation on social media rarely leads to formal political mobilisation, it can foster individualised and emotionally-mediated forms of everyday engagement. This paper provides an empirical analysis of how emotional responses to climate data visualisations on social media shape different forms of political engagement, offering both theoretical insights into affective digital media practices and practical implications for environmental communication. The paper concludes by calling for further empirical research into the affective dimensions of data visualisation and their implications for political engagement, particularly in the context of online misinformation, where emotions influence both the interpretation of data visualisation and subsequent action.

ARS02 Emotions, Affect And Engagement With Crisis

PP 0004 Audiences on shifting grounds: A qualitative study of user experience with sensitive media content and a research framework for inclusive media design

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This paper investigates how audiences experience and navigate sensitive media content and how inclusive design approaches can promote participation, agency, and ethical responsibility within fast-evolving media environments. In a context where automation, datafication, and algorithmic curation continuously transform media production and reception, questions of accessibility and ethics become vital to understanding how audiences negotiate their experiences with media.

From a communication studies perspective, the study explores how media industries enable or hinder the participation of vulnerable groups by analysing technological infrastructures, production logics, and user practices. Drawing on current debates around content warnings and trigger alerts—particularly in video games, streaming, and youth protection contexts (Charles et al., 2022)—the paper discusses how user wellbeing, participation, and inclusion are negotiated within broader discourses on freedom of expression, "cancel culture", and perceived censorship (Daub, 2022). While the convergence of editorial and data systems through AI and machine learning enables new modes of personalisation, such potential remains underutilised in tools designed to inform and empower audiences at moments of emotional or cognitive strain.

The study draws on theories of Human-Centred Artificial Intelligence (Shneiderman, 2020), Inclusive Design (Gilbert, 2019), and Trauma-Informed Computing (Chen et al., 2022), situating these within the cultural studies tradition of circular production and reception processes (Gay et al., 1997). This conceptual framework underpins an empirical, qualitative approach investigating media use, user experience, and design perception.

Empirical data were collected through a mixed-method study: a preliminary online survey (n = 111) explored needs and possible design solutions, followed by thirteen individual interviews, three focus groups, and one expert interview focused on experiences of violence. Participants discussed their strategies for engaging with sensitive or distressing content and evaluated a prototype for an app-based content advisory system. Data analysis followed grounded theory coding procedures (Bohnsack, 1997), supported by MAXQDA, with coding quality and reliability assured through iterative reviews (Kuckartz, 2018).

Findings provide a nuanced picture of how diverse audiences interpret and navigate sensitive content such as discrimination, violence, sexualised violence, trauma, illness, and war. Results indicate that informed choice and contextual information enhance not only safety for vulnerable users but also reflective engagement for broader audiences, suggesting that inclusive media design represents a shared cultural value rather than a niche accessibility concern.

The paper concludes by outlining a communication research framework for inclusive media design that integrates accessibility, ethics, and diversity into production and design processes. Positioned within debates on research ethics and accessibility (Bigl, Gognelashvili, & Gehrau, 2024), it calls for renewed attention to audience agency and solidarity as media environments—and their inequalities—continue to shift.

ARS02 Emotions, Affect And Engagement With Crisis

PP 0005 Revealing intersecting inequalities in digital news consumption: A quantitative approach

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This study examines news consumption inequalities within a rapidly transforming media environment in which traditional and digital platforms increasingly coexist and interact. Grounded in intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Cho et al., 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016), originally developed to analyse overlapping systems of inequality, this research addresses limitations in audience studies, which often analyse in isolation sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, education, or income. An intersectional perspective offers an understanding of how these variables combine to shape citizens' relationships with news and journalism in a fragmented and platform-driven environment (Banjac, 2022).

The relevance of the study results from the limited integration of intersectionality within quantitative audience research (Gouma & Dorer, 2019) despite growing evidence that news interest, trust or avoidance differ along structural lines (Hanitzsch et al., 2018; Strömbäck et al., 2020; Palmer et al., 2024; Newman et al., 2025). The central problem addressed is whether sociodemographic inequalities in those attitudes towards news are better explained through intersectional configurations than through by conventional models that consider variables independently and do not account for their interactions.

A quantitative analysis was conducted using a representative sample of the Portuguese online population (N = 2014). Three sequential models were estimated: (1) a baseline model assessing isolated sociodemographic effects; (2) an intersectional model incorporating cross-classified sociodemographic profiles; and (3) a mediation model testing the influence of using

social media as a primary news source on the intersectional effects observed. Preliminary findings indicate that intersectional configurations reveal inequalities not captured by the model treating predictors as independent and additive.

This study draws inspiration from intersectionality theory as a conceptual framework, but recognises the challenge of applying it carefully so as not to result in abusive generalisations, acknowledging the specificities of the original theoretical proposal. Our main contribution lies in adopting intersectionality as a methodological approach (Byerly et al., 2023), demonstrating empirically that integrating intersectional logic into quantitative models can reveal hidden inequalities in news consumption patterns, providing more granular data for researchers, journalists, and policymakers.

ARS03 Audiences Needs and Media Repertoires Across Generations

PP 0108 (Re)imagining media repertoires: methodological challenges of audience research with Portuguese older people

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The world is ageing: while average life expectancy is increasing, birth rates are declining. According to the data (Pordata, 2024), Portugal is the oldest country in Europe, and the fourth oldest in the world. Statistics predict that by 2030, in Portugal, there will be 215 senior citizens for every 100 young people. However, this change does not occur in isolation: society is becoming increasingly digital. Research indicates that older adults are also experiencing a significant rise in Internet access. In Portugal, only 16.4% of individuals aged 65 to 74 had access to the Internet in 2012; twelve years later, in 2024, this proportion had increased to 61.1% (Pordata, 2025).

Digital media are now ubiquitous, alongside traditional media. There are multiple media consumption options, requiring citizens to make refined choices, as they continue to have limited time to consume them (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012). However, audience studies have focused mainly on young people's perspectives, making the discussion biased (Rosales et al., 2023) and not very oriented towards older people (Azevedo, 2019; Olsson et al., 2019).

This leads us to the need to reflect on the methodological challenges and opportunities arising from research with these audiences, which have been less explored until now. The aim of this presentation is to explore the methodological approach used to understand how older Portuguese audiences construct their media repertoires (Schrøder, 2012) and how they engage and interact with the media in an era of cross-media logic. However, achieving this can be challenging because we are faced with (1) a fragmented media landscape; (2) a very heterogeneous population (Loos, 2012), highly influenced by interdependent aspects that go beyond age, such as education, family structure and profession; (3) media repertoires that emerge and disappear throughout life (Peters & Schrøder, 2018; Ytre-Arne, 2019).

Therefore, we employ mix methods, including semi-structured interviews, with Q-Sort exercises and think-aloud protocols, and reflexive processes, with media diaries, that are a crucial tool for validating the results (Author 2 et al., Year). This study was conducted based on 35 semi-structured interviews with people over 60 years old living in northern Portugal. Through this approach, this paper is not only able to identify these media repertoires, but also to tactically assist in the construction of fair and situated public policies that encompass the diversity and dynamism of media practices among older adults.

ARS03 Audiences Needs and Media Repertoires Across Generations

PP 0109 Negotiating public value: Young audiences' understandings of public service media in Sweden and Estonia

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Public service media (PSM) are undergoing significant transitions around the world, some necessitated by technological shifts, such as the dominance of digital platforms, others precipitated by political and ideological developments in increasingly polarized societies. Common across these processes is that they call into question the value(s) of PSM, or the *public values* that these organisations could or should provide. In doing so, they also make assumptions about the audience(s) of PSM, who are largely seen as fragmented across different media platforms and, therefore, elusive. The concept of public value has been central in defining and defending the mission of PSM and their role in democratic public spheres. Despite its various (re)iterations, however, the concept of public value remains largely undefined and unspecified. Pertinent research has attempted to define (Cañedo et al., 2022; Moe & Van den Bulck, 2014), or even measure (Ibrus et al., 2023; Murschetz et al., 2023) public value. These studies, largely focused on normative understandings of PSM in policy documents (Donders, 2021; Martin & Lowe, 2013), have further highlighted the elusiveness of the concept, as well as the need for more empirical research on its role in PSM (Murschetz et al., 2023).

We address these debates by moving away from normative conceptualizations of public value and exploring how audiences perceive and experience it instead. We start from an understanding of public value as dynamic and evolving and emerging through processes of negotiation and legitimation among different stakeholders (Bolin, 2004; Ibrus et al., 2023). As such,

the concept of public value "is not static but an emergent property" that is "always context-specific and changing" (Ibrus et al., 2023: 6744).

Against this background the overall purpose of this paper is to explore how young audiences in Sweden and Estonia understand and experience the public value of public service media. More specifically we ask: What meanings do young people attach to public service media in their everyday media lives? Which values are articulated as central when young audiences talk about PSM? How are these understandings shaped by national and media-system contexts?

We found that our research participants did not generally use PSM, but instead mostly employed social media platforms for information and entertainment in their daily lives. Nevertheless, the young people we talked to in both countries were highly appreciative of PSM and described them as necessary. Discussions were furthermore underlined by sentimental descriptions of PSM, expressing emotional attachments to them bound both to personal experiences and collective national identities. We argue that PSM values, as understood by our participants, were constructed around three main themes, namely decommodification, national identity and nostalgia. These themes were common in both countries, although they were attached to different aspects, for example to school education in Sweden and the preservation and protection of language in Estonia. Overall, our exploratory study indicated that lack of use is not equated with lack of relevance of PSM or their public values.

ARS03 Audiences Needs and Media Repertoires Across Generations

PP 0110 Between autonomy and social needs of the young audience: A critical revision of digital maturity concept

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The integration of media technologies into our daily routines is inevitable, greatly influenced by the 'culture of constant updating' (Bucher, 2018). While adults' dependence on digital media is widely accepted, the way in which young people experience digital environments is often controversial. Some argue in favor of young people's need for autonomy and their right to access digital spaces; however, there is also a growing tendency to restrict their access to social media platforms, even at a national policy level. These contradictory views highlight disputes about public perceptions of young people's maturity as 'native' digital audiences. This paper proposes addressing such challenges by recognizing digital technology as socially beneficial infrastructure. From this perspective, digital maturity is a multi-layered construct encompassing the ability to use technology autonomously, overcome challenges in digital environments and establish socially responsible interactions (Laaber et al., 2023). However, the paper challenges the conceptual model of the original study on digital maturity and its methodological premises. First, we propose a theoretical shift whereby the core dimensions of digital maturity — autonomous technology use, responsible social interaction, and coping with digital challenges — are understood as reflections of the diverse roles of media technologies in everyday life across generations (see Bengtsson et al., 2022). As these capabilities are not inherent to the digital context, young people encounter individual and structural divides within their own generation. This implies that, when considered within the context of deep mediatization (Couldry & Hepp, 2016; Hepp, 2019), digital maturity is a multifaceted rather than a singular phenomenon.

The paper aims to provide empirical reinforcement of this thesis. A quantitative study of 1,544 secondary school students, conducted in 2024, identified four types of digital maturity. The first type, self-regulatory maturity, is characterized by high levels of autonomous technology use and low tendencies to seek support when problems arise. Reflective digital maturity is on the contrary characterized by high autonomy within digital environments and the ability to seek support. Socially responsible digital users understand the structural limitations of ubiquitous technologies and do not impose personal burdens on others. Individualized digital maturity refers to users who find it difficult to regulate their impulses towards others, yet who are highly autonomous in digital environments. The findings also suggest that, although young users experience a high degree of sovereignty within digital environments and exhibit independence in their digital activities, they simultaneously feel confined within the digital realm. Therefore, digital maturity should be also accompanied by in-depth qualitative research. To this end, the study draws on a larger set of focus group interviews with 41 secondary school students to explore young people's feelings about the pleasures and obstacles of digital autonomy, as well as their social needs in digital spaces. The paper argues that addressing these needs is crucial for improving our understanding of 'alternative types of digital maturity' among young people. Finally, the study aims to combine an original developmental approach to digital maturity with audience perspectives on the experiences of young users within multiple digital environments.

ARS03 Audiences Needs and Media Repertoires Across Generations

PP 0111 Alternative news use reimagined: Audience pathways of belonging and critique

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Across Europe's shifting grounds of communication, audiences increasingly encounter information outside traditional news channels. Scholarship on alternative news has mapped how such outlets fit into users' repertoires and relate to trust and political attitudes, offering a baseline for mainstream–alternative dynamics. Yet we still lack audience-centered

accounts that treat "alternative news" more broadly – as practices and contents spanning diverse actors, formats, genres and platforms – and ask how audience practices around non-traditional sources and arenas shape identity, community and patterns of societal critique.

This paper addresses that gap by reorienting research on alternative news use further from a media-centric to an audience-centered perspective. Rather than focusing exclusively on the uses of specific alternative news sites, the study examines how Danish mainstream-critical media users traverse a wider periphery of non-traditional sources, formats and initiatives, including, but going beyond, (self-)perceived alternative media outlets – and how these traversals relate to identity, belonging and critique in everyday life. Building on recognition theory and Douglas Giles' distinction between affirmational and transformational recognition struggles, the paper refines an audience-centered model, asking when and how audience engagement with alternative sources of information remain situated efforts to affirm identity and communities versus move into more publicly oriented struggles over critique and recognition.

Empirically, the analysis draws on 32 in-depth interviews with purposively sampled Danish users from both left- and right-wing positions of the political spectrum that are critical of the media mainstream. Each interview begins with a Q-sort-inspired card-sorting exercise to locate informants' alternative-to-mainstream sources of news and information, followed by narrative probing on recognition-related sentiments, experiences and opinions, and closes by exploring relationships – if any – to alternative social media platforms and initiatives. Participants were also invited to make data donations of their media-use histories, enabling triangulation of reported practices with digital trace data.

In line with ECC 2026's emphasis on paths, connections and futures, the paper contributes by proposing a typology of audience pathways through alternative-to-mainstream information and situating these within broader dynamics of identity construction and societal critique. This framework helps explain how audiences negotiate belonging and critical reflexivity across intersecting scales – and how these negotiations may matter for democratic futures.

ARS04 Disinformation, Misinformation and Hostile Narratives

PP 0112 Stability or transformation – How the ban on pro-Kremlin media impacts the news repertoires of Russophone audiences in Latvia and Estonia?

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By the studies conducted in 2019–2025, we explore the dynamics of the news repertoires of the Russophone audiences in Latvia and Estonia before and after the ban on pro-Kremlin media outlets following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Building on Hasebrink and Domeyer's (2012) conceptualization of media repertoires as "the whole variety of media regularly assembled by a person … not merely the sum of different media he or she uses, but a meaningfully structured composition of media" (pp. 759–760), news repertoires can be understood as personalized, cross-media constellations of news sources that individuals routinely rely on to stay informed about current affairs. Prior research offers mixed evidence regarding the stability of news repertoires over time. Major societal disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, could reasonably be expected to prompt changes in individuals' news repertoires. This expectation is supported by studies documenting a reconfiguration (either an expansion or a narrowing) of news repertoires during the pandemic (de Bruin et al., 2025; Johansson et al., 2024; Syvertsen & Ytre-Arne, 2023; Vandenplas & Picone, 2024; Vandenplas et al., 2021). Additional support comes from evidence of increased news consumption during the pandemic, albeit concentrated in specific media types, including television news, online news, and social media (Van Aelst et al., 2021). At the same time, other studies provide countervailing evidence, showing the persistence and ritualized character of news repertoires even in times of crisis (Andersen et al., 2022; de Bruin et al., 2025; Valenzuela et al., 2025).

Based on a data collected by the combination of quantitative (surveys in 2019 (n = 802); 2023 (n = 645); and 2025 (n = 2090)) and qualitative research (four focus group discussions in 2024 (participants in total n = 24); three waves of the diary studies in 2024–2025 (n = 24 per each wave)), conducted before and after the full-scale invasion of the Ukraine we analyze an impact of the ban of the pro-Kremlin news providers on the Russophone audiences' news repertoires in Latvia and Estonia. The findings indicate that the share of Russophone audiences who have exercised the pro-Kremlin news repertoire has declined markedly following the ban; however, a significant part of them have found access to pro-Kremlin news sources and continue to use them. The analysis also reveals a pronounced shift toward news consumption through social media platforms. Hence, a part of former users of banned pro-Kremlin media sources have adapted their media practices by relocating their news use to social media environments where such content remains accessible.

In conclusion, despite substantial transformations in the media environment, the news repertoires of Russophone audiences in Latvia and Estonia following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine exhibit a high degree of continuity. Accordingly, these findings are consistent with prior scholarship highlighting the persistence of news repertoires, even in the context of major societal disruptions (Andersen et al., 2022; de Bruin et al., 2025; Valenzuela et al., 2025).

ARS04 Disinformation, Misinformation and Hostile Narratives

PP 0113 Generational differences in response to divisive misinformation: Focus group evidence from Serbia, Poland and Romania

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This paper examines how people of different generations respond to divisive misinformation in three post-socialist European societies: Serbia, Poland and Romania. Research on generational differences in susceptibility to misinformation has produced mixed and sometimes contradictory findings. Some studies link older age to greater vulnerability to false content, due mostly to cognitive ageing and limited digital literacy (Guess, Nagler & Tucker 2019; Brashier & Schacter 2020). Others find no clear differences, or even lower susceptibility among older adults, especially in health-related contexts (Roozenbeek et al. 2020; Sultan et al. 2024). These inconsistencies suggest that age alone is not a reliable predictor, and that methodological choices and contextual factors may shape observed patterns.

To explore these issues qualitatively, we conducted 18 focus groups (six in each country) in April and May 2025. Groups were stratified by age into three cohorts (18–30, 31–50, and 51–75). Participants were selected based on questionnaires capturing demographic, media and political characteristics. In total, 125 people took part. Each group was given four examples of misinformation: two related to the war in Ukraine and two concerning LGBTQ issues. These examples contained conspiratorial or stigmatizing claims familiar from public debates in the region. Participants discussed whether and why they found the claims credible, how they felt while reading them, and which cues they used when making judgements.

Recordings were transcribed in the original languages and coded in NVivo. After an initial coding round, individual arguments were classified according to their proximity to the text: "close" arguments grounded in textual features, "prior knowledge" arguments referring to broader context, and "distant" arguments detached from the specific claims. This allowed us to trace shifts in reasoning patterns across age groups.

Preliminary findings point to three tendencies. First, younger participants often treated the task as a form of fact-checking. They scanned details, questioned sources and were more comfortable leaving uncertainty unresolved. Second, older adults drew more frequently on lived experience and broader moral or political narratives. Rather than scrutinizing details, they used the examples as prompts for articulating existing beliefs, concerns or memories. These contributions were not necessarily less critical; many older participants relied on accumulated knowledge to reject implausible claims, echoing work showing the protective role of crystallised knowledge (Brashier & Schacter 2020; Cosgrove et al. 2023). Third, across all groups, cues of trust – such as familiarity with the sender or perceived moral alignment – shaped interpretations more strongly than factual content alone.

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ARS04 Disinformation, Misinformation and Hostile Narratives

PP 0114 Narratives of extremism: Far-right content in YouTube accounts

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Recent research has identified a widening gender gap in political orientations, with young men increasingly gravitating toward far-right and authoritarian positions more than women (de Boise & Hjalmarsson, 2021). In parallel, individuals aged 18 to 40 are progressively disengaging from traditional news media and instead relying on digital platforms—particularly YouTube—for political information, commentary, and interpretation (Zimmermann et al., 2022). Within this environment, content creators who position themselves as "alternative," anti-mainstream, or anti-elite actors have become influential intermediaries in political communication. These creators often disseminate far-right narratives and disinformation through indirect modes of address, including satire, irony, appeals to "common sense," and populist anti-establishment frames (Munger & Phillips, 2020; Finlayson, 2022).This paper examines how contemporary forms of extremism circulate less through explicit propaganda and more through ambiguous, decentralized, and affectively charged online ecologies. Drawing on a large-scale mixed-methods study of YouTube videos and comment sections, we combine automated content analysis with qualitative interpretation to identify far-right and authoritarian narratives across 100 YouTube channels in Spain and 100 in the United States. Importantly, many of these channels are not overtly political but attract large young male audiences. The analysis focuses on the co-construction of meaning between content creators and their audiences, showing

how far-right narratives delegitimizing democratic institutions and fostering mistrust are normalized through humor, irony, and ostensibly apolitical discourse. The findings reveal two distinct yet interconnected patterns. On the one hand, explicitly ideological channels display dense clusters of far-right narratives, often accompanied by shared linguistic codes, slang, and recurring symbolic references actively reproduced by audiences in comment sections. These channels, however, tend to have relatively limited reach in terms of subscribers and views. On the other hand, and more concerningly, far-right narratives also appear within high-visibility, mainstream-oriented channels in subtler and more diffuse forms. In these cases, creators occasionally engage with social or political issues using depoliticized language, avoiding overt ideological markers while nonetheless circulating themes and frames commonly associated with far-right discourse. This process contributes to the normalization and legitimation of such narratives within broader cultural contexts. Comparative analysis reveals striking similarities between Spanish and U.S.-based channels, two contexts of particular relevance given the global reach of English and Spanish-language content and their transnational audiences. By tracing the rhetorical strategies, affective cues, and participatory dynamics that allow extremism to operate "under the radar," this research advances understandings of contemporary far-right communication in digital environments. It contributes to debates on online extremism by conceptualizing ambiguity not as a weakness, but as a central communicative resource through which disinformation, trust erosion, and ideological legitimation intersect in platformized public spheres.

ARS04 Disinformation, Misinformation and Hostile Narratives

PP 0115 The challenge is the message: Uses and gratifications across positive, neutral, and negative social media challenges

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Social media challenges (SMCs) constitute a widespread social practice in contemporary digital culture, particularly among adolescents and young adults. These challenges invite users, explicitly or implicitly, to perform specific actions, document them, and share the outcomes on social media, generating visibility, imitation, and collective participation. While previous research has addressed the diffusion, content, risks, and normative framings of social media challenges, comparatively little attention has been paid to the everyday gratifications that motivate participation across different types of challenges.

Grounded in Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory, this study examines how users experience participation in three types of social media challenges: positive, neutral, and negative. Positive challenges are understood as promoting pro-social values or contribution, neutral challenges as entertainment-oriented and low-risk, and negative challenges as involving risky or harmful behaviors. The study asks whether these different framings are associated with distinct gratification patterns, or whether participation in challenges is primarily shaped by the format itself.

The study employs a quantitative within-subject design that enables systematic comparison across challenge types within the same participants. An online questionnaire was administered to 172 U.S. participants aged 13–35, all of whom reported prior participation in at least one positive, neutral, and negative challenge. A validated 96-item instrument measured seven gratification dimensions: entertainment, sociability, cognitive stimulation, escapism, self-expression, social status, and social recognition. Each gratification was assessed separately for the three challenge types, with scenario order randomized to reduce order effects.

Analyses using repeated-measures ANOVA and Friedman tests reveal a high degree of consistency in gratification patterns across challenge types. Entertainment emerges as the most dominant gratification in positive, neutral, and negative challenges alike. Significant differences across challenge types are limited to sociability, cognitive gratification, and social status, and these differences are modest in size. Positive challenges are associated with slightly higher sociability and cognitive gratification, whereas negative challenges show a modest increase in status-related gratification. No significant differences are found for entertainment, escapism, self-expression, or social recognition.

Overall, the findings indicate that users approach different types of social media challenges in largely similar ways. Rather than redefining users' motivations, challenge framing primarily adjusts the relative emphasis of secondary gratifications. Participation is anchored in the perform-document-share structure that characterizes challenges as a communicative format. In this sense, engagement is driven less by what the challenge represents and more by how participation is organized.

By examining social media challenges as a recurring participatory practice rather than as isolated content types or platform features, this study contributes to audience and reception research by showing how user gratifications remain stable across shifting digital contexts. The findings extend the application of Uses and Gratifications theory to participatory digital formats and offer an empirically grounded account of how audiences engage with challenges as a routine form of digital entertainment and social interaction.

ARS04 Disinformation, Misinformation and Hostile Narratives

PP 0116 Beyond passive consumption: Audience engagement and the normalization of hostile narratives among youth on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube

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Problem Statement

For youth audiences, social media is not merely a source of information but a primary space for identity construction, social recognition, and peer interaction. However, this "connected" lifestyle exposes adolescents—who are in a highly permeable developmental stage—to a digital ecosystem where hostility is no longer an outlier but a structural layer. This proposal explores how youth audiences actively interact with hate speech, transforming it from a consumed product into a conversational engine.

Project and Data Overview: Drawing on the **CeMIYA project** (2024), this study analyzes a corpus of **22,123 publications** targeted at or consumed by youth across YouTube (49.5%), TikTok (30.4%), and Instagram (21.1%). Using multimodal automated detection and topic modeling, the project mapped eight categories of hate, including misogyny, racism, and "aspectism" (lookism).

Audience Behavior and Interaction Findings

1. **Hostility as a "Conversational Engine":** The data reveals a clear divergence in audience behavior: while neutral content receives more social validation via "likes" (≈27% more), **hate-filled content drives significantly more active participation**. Specifically, **56.88% of all comments** in the sample were concentrated on hostile posts.
2. **Platform-Specific Engagement Patterns:**
   - **TikTok:** In this platform, hostility acts as a massive engagement trigger. Hate-filled posts generate **double the average number of comments** compared to neutral ones ($F = 14.99$, $p < .001$), and it is the only network where hate posts also receive significantly more "likes" (20,800 vs. 6,900). This suggests that the memetic and humorous affordances of TikTok facilitate the normalization of hate as "entertainment".
   - **YouTube:** Audiences here engage with more complex, "multi-hate" narratives. Content often functions as a "thesis" for discrimination, where the comments section acts as a long-term archive for radicalizing positions.
   - **Instagram:** Youth behavior is oriented toward aesthetic performance. Audience hostility is frequently channeled through **aspectism** (lookism), where physical appearance becomes a vector for symbolic violence and social judgment.
3. **The Structural Role of Misogyny:** Across all platforms, misogyny remains the "backbone" of youth-targeted hate. Audiences participate in narratives that penalize female autonomy, often combining gender-based hate with racism or lookism (intersectionality appearing in 38.4% of cases).

Conclusion

The behavior of youth audiences suggests that hostility has been integrated into their digital "attention economy". Hostile content is not just "seen"; it is commented on and debated, serving as a resource for visibility. We conclude that digital literacy must move beyond teaching youth to *identify* hate to addressing the *incentives* that make engaging with hostility a primary form of social interaction. Engaging with digital hate for a young person is like attending a **chaotic neighborhood bonfire**. While most people (the audience) might "like" the quiet, safe parts of the park (neutral content), they are far more likely to gather, shout, and stay longer around the fire that is burning most aggressively (hate speech). The problem is that as they spend more time circling the fire, the smoke (the hostile narrative) becomes a smell they no longer notice on their own clothes—it becomes a normalized part of their daily environment.

ARS05 News Repertoires and Information Practices

PP 0212 News repertoires between habitus and the reflexive project of the self

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This paper takes a phenomenological approach to news repertoires informed by theorists such as Schutz (1945), Ihde (1990), Silverstone (2007), Knoblauch (2013) and contemporary implementations (e.g., Couldry & Hepp 2017, Bengtsson and Johansson 2021). It construes news repertoires as interfaces that establish different types of relations between the news user and the public world. In that capacity news repertoires represent sites where some of the most pressing questions faced by current media scholarship could be holistically investigated. The paper poses the question of how different news repertoires are formed and seeks to construct a realistic model of the interplay between agency and structure in that process.

The variety and complexity of the practices through which individuals search, select, assess and share the news that connect them to the public world have grown explosively in the hybrid media environment. This has stimulated cross-media research focused on the patterns in which audiences combine available news channels and content to form distinct repertoires. Repertoires are the dynamic outcome of the choices that citizens make as knowledgeable agents with a view to their social situatedness and personal relevance, interpersonal sharing and collective identity (Hasebrink and Domeyer, 2012; Schrøder, 2015; Swart et al., 2017).

Based on the analysis of data collected from a theoretically diversified sample of 50 Canadian respondents through a Q-sort activity and in-depth interviews, the study charts the continuum between reflexive choice in the assembling of an individual news repertoire and the habitual adherence to sources and practices imposed by contextual circumstances or handed down by family and peer influence as well as authoritative opinion leaders of various provenance. That continuum is conceptualized as flanked by Bourdieu's idea of habitus on one side (Lindel, 2017), and Giddens' vision of the "reflexive project of the Self" on the other. While the cross-media environment in principle affords reflexive navigation and selection aligned with the "reflexive project of the self," entrenched limitations outside of users' control not only persist, but sometimes dominate repertoire formation.

Parsing the distribution of repertoires across socio-demographic categories and inquiring into the reasons, feelings and motivations underlying respondents' repertoire construction and maintenance, modification and transformation, the analysis uncovers significant inequalities of material opportunity, media literacy and critical skills that hinder the reflexivity of the project. These inequalities contribute to a widely divergent sense of interest, engagement and agency vis-à-vis the public world. They create critical vulnerabilities reproduced through systematic enculturation into subject positions and mindsets.

Is there a meta-practice of news use that could reconcile a reflexive project of repertoire construction and a structured habitus, product of economic and social positioning? Is a reflexive news habitus possible or is it a contradiction in terms? A solution to this dilemma is sought by sifting through the deliberations, discoveries and innovations presented by respondents' accounts.

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ARS05 News Repertoires and Information Practices

PP 0213 "Too far away?" The subjective experience of distance in multimodal news reception

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Geographical proximity is a well-established news factor that enhances relevance not only in the eyes of journalists but also in the perception of audiences (Eilders, 1997). Beyond this cognitive framing, people are more likely to feel compassion for distant suffering when they perceive personal or cultural similarity to those affected (Huiberts, 2020; Huiberts & Joye, 2018). Yet, these subjective dimensions of perceived proximity and identification remain underexplored—particularly in multimodal news reception. This gap raises a critical question: Why do audiences still feel emotionally distant from news that, by conventional standards, should be relevant?

The growing tendency to avoid news, driven by emotional fatigue and the desire to escape negative emotions (Edgerly, 2022; Kuhlmann et al., 2014), suggests that perceived distance is not merely a matter of geography but a complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and multimodal factors. Drawing on framing and multimodal media effects, this study investigates how recipients subjectively perceive distance in news content. We ask:

(1) How do visual and textual frame elements shape perceptions of proximity or distance?
(2) What personal and emotional explanations do audiences give for feeling distant, and what conclusions do they draw?
(3) What transformative demands does this perspective place on journalistic practice?

To address these questions, we conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews with 33 participants who retrospectively reconstructed their reception of three multimodal news items—on climate policies, economic inflation, and health policy—using think-aloud techniques. Transcripts were analyzed via qualitative content analysis.

First results show that participants rely heavily on visual cues for initial meaning-making, as mirrored in this quote: "That's India or somewhere else far away" (89f8df2f_B, 21). This reflects a tendency to perceive distant countries as interchangeable (Scott, 2014) and highlights how visual markers—such as skin color, landscape, or architectural style—immediately signal perceived distance. Moreover, this sense of remoteness translates into reduced engagement: "I didn't find the text all that interesting […] because it's kind of too far away" (13c34bf1_B_2, 133). Consistent with prior research (Eilders, 1997), participants linked perceived proximity to heightened relevance: "News from the neighboring town […] affects me much more than if it happens thousands of kilometers away" (818a71e_B, 43). This aligns with Trope and Liberman's (2010) theory of psychological distance, which shows that physical closeness enhances affective engagement.

Yet, beyond geography, emotional responses were shaped by subjective factors: personal experiences, perceived cultural congruence, and affective resonance. These findings suggest that empathy is not triggered solely by proximity, but by the possibility of emotional identification.

Our study thus challenges the assumption that proximity alone ensures relevance. Instead, it suggests that journalism might benefit from actively creating points of identification—making distant stories not only visible but also more relatable. Future studies should explore how visual modalities—particularly in contrast to text-only formats—shape perceptions of distance and identification, asking whether images amplify or mitigate emotional detachment in distant conflict reporting, and how their presence or absence influences the audience's sense of connection.

ARS05 News Repertoires and Information Practices

PP 0214 Alarmed citizens' information-seeking repertoires

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Aim

In the contemporary, high-choice media landscape, citizens use different combinations of media and non-mediated sources to stay informed and connected. Extending the analytical frameworks of media repertoires (Popp & Hasebrink, 2006), news repertoires (Peters & Schrøder, 2018), communication repertoires (Helles et al, 2015) and information source repertoires (Sommerfeldt, 2015), the present paper analyses *alarmed citizens' information-seeking repertoires* (Johansson, 2025). This approach emphasizes citizens' active information seeking; it focuses on information beyond institutional sources and examines how citizens find information about specific topic(s) in practice.

At present, official epistemic authorities face falling trust levels, and knowledge is increasingly politicized an polarized. The ongoing 'crisis of expertise' have gained much scholarly, media and political attention, as scholars and specialists are attacked for being politically biased; the financial structures of universities and research centers are under pressure; and lay people dismiss established expert authority to seek advice from alternative sources beyond and in opposition to official authorities. In this paper we analyse one under-researched dimension of this larger issue, more precisely we trace the information-seeking repertoires of citizens with high political engagement and low trust in established experts, who actively seek out information that confirm their worldviews and challenge public authorities. Building on in-depth interviews with informants in opposition to established medicine and official health policies, we ask: What characterizes alarmed citizens' information-seeking repertoires and how do they understand trustworthy expertise?

Data and Method

The study builds on 25 interviews with Norwegian citizens (Thorbjørnsrud & Figenschou, 2022) with three common features, as alarmed citizens: i) They were participants in the oppositional social media networks that formed during the Covid-19 pandemic, and are deeply engaged in contested health issues, ii) they have low institutional trust and feel that governing elites, experts and media professionals fail to keep them safe and informed, and, iii) they are highly engaged in finding and sharing alternative information, and inhabit strong feelings of fear and mistrust, combined with an urgency to seek out information and support for their worldview. Interviewees were recruited based on their engagement in Facebook groups, alternative health media, and health pressure groups. The interviews were conducted between January and June 2024. They lasted 80–90 minutes on average and interview transcripts were coded in HyperResearch.

Preliminary findings

The interviewees' information-seeking repertoires consists of alternative epistemic authorities (Bartsch et al, 2025), primarily international alternative media, alternative (news) influencers, and banned, rogue experts. Their networks are established through active curation and information-sharing, in which the interviewees are actively contributing and taking the role as lay-experts. The alternative epistemic authorities deemed trustworthy by the interviewees, share some characteristics: These 'alternative experts' are outspoken individuals, who are strongly opposed to or have broken with established institutions (e.g. research institutions or established news media). They are often banned or condemned by established authorities, and they primarily distribute their insights and analysis online. Overall, we find that conferred trust is based on perceived personal characteristics of integrity, independence, and courage rather than institutional belonging, displaying hyper-individualised, digital information-seeking repertoires.

ARS05 News Repertoires and Information Practices

PP 0215 Sketching bodies at wait: Mobile media use in everyday transit

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This paper presents work in progress on an alternative, low-intervention method for studying mobile media use as embodied, spatial, and largely pre-reflective practice. The study responds to a recurring methodological problem in media and communication research: much everyday mobile media use unfolds in situations of waiting, boredom, and low-level immersion that resist verbalisation and tend to disappear in methods oriented toward intensity, engagement, or spectacle. Interviews, surveys, or data-driven approaches are poorly calibrated to capture such banal practices, despite their centrality to everyday media use.

We explore rapid observational drawing as a method. The empirical material consists of 100 hand-drawn sketches produced in public spaces, primarily sites of transit and waiting (stations, trains, trams). Each drawing was completed in one to three minutes and depicts individuals or small tableaux of people using mobile phones. The drawings deliberately avoid prolonged observation or interaction with participants. In some cases, brief notes were added about visible on-screen activity when this could be observed unobtrusively; in many cases, only bodily posture, gesture, and spatial orientation were recorded. The material is explicitly exploratory and non-representative.

Analytically, the drawings are treated as a corpus for identifying recurring bodily configurations of mobile media use. Attention is given to posture and position, macro versus micro bodily focus, stillness versus movement, solitary versus collective use, and standing versus sitting bodies. Particular emphasis is placed on non-spectacular behaviours such as slumped postures, repetitive thumb movements, and arrested motion. These configurations are approached as indicators of how mobile media reorganise attention, time, and presence in mundane situations of waiting and transition.

Methodologically, the paper argues that rapid observational drawing offers a way of accessing embodied media practices without relying on verbal articulation or extractive forms of documentation. By foregrounding banality and boredom as central analytical concerns, the method extends existing approaches to media reception into the bodily domain and proposes sketching as a complementary tool for studying everyday media use where "nothing much seems to happen," yet media are nonetheless deeply worn into posture, gesture, and everyday life.

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ARS05 News Repertoires and Information Practices

PP 0216 Introducing the "Social Night Monitor": Towards an understanding and measurement of participation levels between citizens and journalism

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Getting to know audiences seems to be central to journalism. In contemporary approaches, technology is often regarded as the facilitator model for wider chances for people to interact with media (Hendrickx et al., 2024). Notwithstanding this slightly enthusiastic framework, there is significant scientific literature dealing with the other way around: studying the non-participants, ranging from those who do not want to interact or share content (Mentzel et al., 2023), collaborate, correct and suggest (Mathews et al., 2022), to the ones who act only as lurkers (Spiley, 2024).

This communication follows the concept of "social night", as proposed by Manuel Pinto (2009) to address those non-participants in the media sphere, "living in the same continent, but remaining silent and silenced, barely seen and visible in the news". In doing so, this presentation seeks to present an ongoing methodological instrument conceived to characterize participatory strategies between audiences and journalists.

The "Social Night Monitor" features a small-scale survey, designed to easily interact with users, thus evaluation some of the following aspects: participation onsite, online comment, content sharing or collaborations, just to name a few participatory

strategies. Participants are also required to share some social and demographic characteristics and news media consumption routines as for further cross-analysis and possible correlations.

This monitor has already been tested, featuring a sample of 50 participants, within a specific set of common attributes: audiences in a university level-based, same graduation (Communication Sciences). Preliminary results provide relevant insights: there is a quite obvious "social night" when it comes with dealing with interaction and comments in the journalism, but participation seem to be alive somehow: reactions, likes and sharing are predominant.

Starting from this prototyped experience, this monitor seeks to evaluate the participatory relationship between citizens and journalistic media organizations, if any. The potential of such instrument remains in its easiness of implementation, this targeting into specific groups which arguably provide relevant data for the definition of media strategies with their audiences.

ARS06 Audiences, Democracy and Polarisation

PP 0217 Psychological closeness and partisan television news in a disruptive hostage release media event

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How do audiences experience, interpret, and respond to a nationally salient crisis broadcast when the media environment is hybrid and politically polarized? This study examines audience reception in Israel of the October 2025 televised release of Israeli hostages from Hamas captivity. We treat the broadcast as a disruptive media event and foreground reception as an empirical object: the felt intensity of the event, the evaluative interpretations it elicits, and the civic responses that follow.

Classic media event theory emphasizes integrative broadcast rituals capable of momentarily suspending social divisions. However, in hybrid and politically polarized media systems, crisis broadcasts can simultaneously concentrate collective attention and intensify contestation over meaning. Building on scholarship on disruptive media events in divided societies, we argue that the intensity of audience experience is not reducible to partisan channel choice. Rather, it is shaped primarily by psychological proximity—perceived closeness along temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical dimensions—which heightens self-relevance and triggers concrete processing.

We conceptualize Media Event Perception (MEP) as a reception construct capturing experiential intensity across five dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, emotional, communal, and national engagement. A one-day online survey was conducted immediately after the live broadcast ($n = 400$), using quota sampling and post-stratification weighting. Analyses requiring a single primary channel were conducted among respondents who identified one main channel ($n = 321$): Channel 12 (52.6%), Channel 14 (27.1%), Channel 13 (13.1%), and Channel 11 (7.2%).

Findings reveal shared affective reception alongside partisan divergence in interpretation and civic action. Emotional and national engagement were the most intense MEP dimensions, whereas behavioral engagement was consistently the weakest, indicating strong affective resonance without equally strong ritualized viewing practices. Support for the hostage deal differed markedly by primary channel (Welch's $F(3, 76.4) = 33.30$, $p < .001$): Channel 14 viewers reported lower support ($M = 3.25$, $SD = .92$) than Channel 12 viewers ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .68$). Hostage-related civic activities also varied ($F(3, 317) = 5.71$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .051$), with higher engagement among Channel 12 viewers ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.11$) than among Channel 14 viewers ($M = 1.91$, $SD = .97$).

In contrast, reception intensity was primarily driven by psychological proximity. Proximity was strongly associated with MEP ($r = .64$, $p < .001$). In hierarchical OLS regression, channel indicators explained limited variance in MEP ($R^2 = .027$), whereas adding psychological proximity and deal support substantially increased explanatory power (final model $R^2 = .460$). Psychological proximity was the dominant predictor ($\beta = .632$, $p < .001$), and most channel differences attenuated after adjustment.

The findings contribute to audience and reception research by distinguishing an affective layer of shared experience—where emotional and national engagement converge—from an interpretive and behavioral layer structured by partisanship in polarized hybrid media environments. They also advance understanding of how psychological proximity operates as a central mechanism through which mediated crises become subjectively "eventful."

ARS06 Audiences, Democracy and Polarisation

PP 0218 Citizens' assemblies as media accountability forums: Deliberation and audience sense-making of journalism in Serbia

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Research on audience–media relations has documented growing dissatisfaction with journalism across many political and media systems, yet much of this work relies on surveys or interviews that capture individual attitudes in isolation. Far less is known about how audiences articulate expectations and negotiate normative claims when they are provided with structured opportunities for collective discussion. At the same time, citizens' assemblies have gained prominence as

democratic innovations designed to strengthen collective reasoning and evidence-based public participation. Yet, with only a few notable exceptions, citizens' assemblies have rarely been implemented and studied in the context of audience–media relations. This contribution does exactly that by examining how citizens articulate expectations, critiques, and normative claims toward news media when provided with structured deliberative space.

Empirically, the study draws on qualitative data from three one-day events inspired by the format of citizens' assemblies in the highly polarized media environment of Serbia, shaped over the past decade by democratic backsliding and pervasive state influence over public communication. Two assemblies – on the public service broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) and on the sustainability of local media – were conducted in May and December 2025, respectively. The third assembly, on news reporting in minority languages and in marginalized communities, will have been completed before the conference. Each assembly brings together socio-demographically diverse participants (n = 50 each) and is designed to facilitate informed deliberation through small-group peer discussions and plenary sessions with relevant experts and decision-makers. The analysis is based on full transcripts of the deliberative sessions and employs thematic analysis to trace how participants articulated evaluations of journalism, defined public-interest standards, reflected on the constraints under which media operate, and responded to counter-arguments and competing interpretations.

The paper examines how deliberation reshapes both the form and content of audience talk about the media. The findings show the potential of deliberative conditions to enable participants to move beyond generalized expressions of distrust or dissatisfaction toward more differentiated and reflexive evaluations. This was evident in discussions about RTS, where participants recalibrated their criticisms in relation to the common good rather than primarily from individual or self-referential perspectives, and displayed a growing sense of responsibility for the future of public service media. In the assembly focused on local media, participants' understanding of sustainability shifted from a question of market viability toward a relational perspective linking public funding, editorial integrity, and citizens' right to access information in the local public interest. In both cases, participants demonstrated a capacity to hold ambivalent and context-sensitive positions, acknowledging structural constraints while upholding diverse normative ideals of journalism. The paper argues that citizens' assemblies offer a valuable methodological lens for audience research by scrutinizing how media perceptions are socially produced, contested, and revised through interaction, and what role deliberation can play in these processes.

ARS06 Audiences, Democracy and Polarisation

PP 0219 Relational polarization and trust dynamics in media-audience interactions: Examining how people assess three controversial issues

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In this study, we explore public opinion formation as a mutually integrating process that treats media and audiences as an amalgamated whole – something that emerges from the relationship between media and audience, rather than from two separate worlds. Drawing on a human-centered framework (O'Boyle, 2022) and empirical findings from a public opinion survey on media's assessments, we examine how people engage with thematically controversial issues. Our analysis reveals that the outcome of such "relational dynamics" – an interaction between media "supply" and audience information choices, i.e., "demand" features – may lead to "relational polarization" (Mepham et al. 2025), a process in which divisions become embedded in social ties and people's media interaction patterns.

Despite extensive research on transformations in the public sphere (Mansell et al., 2025; Fischer & Jarren, 2023), little is known about how people engage with media channels, develop trust, and form opinions in hybrid media environments (Baden et al., 2025). Anything that weakens the reliability of public information – an abundance of content of unclear origins and authority, algorithmically managed manipulations of people's attention – distracts opinion negotiations, undermines social cohesion, and contributes to polarization in society. These challenges are a result of big structural shifts in the modern media environments, which have produced conditions where reliable and verifiable information is very hard to sustain. They also feed into broader processes of audience fragmentation – a phenomenon that is often addressed by various scholars as the key outcome of the transformed "knowledge order" in contemporary societies (Neuberger et al., 2023). Because the system of public knowledge organization has changed, including the ways societies produce, distribute, negotiate, and validate knowledge, people's relationships with media – how they use, perceive, judge, and trust the media – have also been transformed.

To test these observations in practice, we present an empirical study – a 2024 representative survey of Lithuanian residents (N = 1000) – which is focused on people's assessments of three controversial topics, defined here as social, political, and cultural. We examine how people think about the selected issue (what their opinions and concerns are), and what their views on the media's portrayals of that specific issue (its accuracy, thoroughness, audience inclusion, media's attempts to seek dialogue, etc.) are. The analysis compares media perceptions between two groups with opposing opinions on selected issues: supporters and opponents.

The results indicate that polarization of society seems to be closely tied to how the groups perceive the media's coverage, rather than to general trust or distrust of the media. Differences in how much people trust media coverage depending on

the topic ("this media is for people like me") show that reliability judgments push people to align with some media channels and reject others – thereby polarizing media-audience relationships. By examining relational factors, our results add to recent scholarship on how the public sphere is fragmenting (Mansell et al., 2025; Fletcher et al., 2025; Splichal, 2024) and how media roles are shifting, especially when reporting on controversial and polarizing issues.

ARS06 Audiences, Democracy and Polarisation

PP 0220 Distrust and polarisation: Citizens' perceptions of journalism in Spain, Italy and Slovakia

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In today's political and media landscape, trust in both journalism and public institutions plays a crucial role in shaping how citizens engage with news. According to the Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2024), news media increasingly face challenges stemming from mis- and disinformation, political attacks, and an unstable business environment. At the same time, the growing relevance of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube for news consumption further complicates public perceptions of journalism and its boundaries. Building on Mayer et al. (1995), who define trust as "the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on expectations of their integrity, ability, and benevolence," and on subsequent work highlighting the role of emotional and social experiences in shaping a broader "propensity to trust" (McAllister, 1995; Baer et al., 2018; Liu & Li, 2023), this study examines perceptions of journalism and levels of trust and distrust in news media in Italy, Spain, and Slovakia.

Drawing on nationally representative surveys (N = 1,000 per country), we conducted factor analysis to identify five key dimensions explaining cross-national variation in trust and distrust. Two dimensions capture trust in journalism: perceived independence and credibility of journalistic reporting, and confidence in journalists' professional skills and working conditions. Three dimensions reflect distrust: preference for alternative news sources outside journalism, perceptions of external influences shaping news coverage, and extreme distrust rooted in a negative assessment of the contemporary information environment. In Italy and Spain, trust-related factors cluster around indecision (3 points in a 0 to 5 scale), while distrust-related factors display greater variability and positive skew, marking a higher degree of polarization around distrust than trust. In Slovakia, by contrast, although trust factors also hover near indecision, distrust—particularly the "extreme distrust" dimension—is markedly higher, indicating a more polarized and distrust-dominated media environment.

The findings also point to a substantial erosion of institutional credibility. Among younger audiences (18–29), independent YouTubers are trusted at levels comparable to traditional news media, signalling a significant reorientation of trust toward digital actors. Notably, age does not emerge as a differentiating variable in the factor structure itself, as trust and distrust patterns are similarly distributed across age groups, gender, and educational levels. Instead, institutional trust—measured through satisfaction with political institutions, perceptions of democracy, and evaluations of political parties—emerges as the most influential explanatory factor across all three countries. These results suggest that journalism is increasingly perceived not as an autonomous societal actor, but as part of the broader institutional and political establishment, with important implications for understanding contemporary dynamics of media trust and legitimacy.

ARS06 Audiences, Democracy and Polarisation

PP 0221 The weight of ideals: Democratic commitment and media experiences in Europe

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Across Europe, citizens often express support for democratic values such as freedom, equality, participation, and collective self-determination. At the same time, their everyday encounters with democracy—largely shaped by news media, social platforms, and political communication—frequently reveal frustrations, confusion, or a sense of disconnect from these ideals (Voltmer, 2013). This paradox, in which strong attachment to democratic principles coexists with critical or disillusioned experiences of their practical enactment, highlights persistent challenges in how democracy is lived and perceived.(Mouffe, 2014; Norris, 2011).

While previous research has mainly approached this paradox at the institutional or normative level, this study examines how it is lived and negotiated by citizens through media practices. Drawing on qualitative data from ten European countries collected within an Horizon Europe project, the paper investigates how citizens make sense of democracy through their routine engagement with news media, social platforms, and political discourse, and how these mediated encounters shape perceptions of democratic functioning and legitimacy.

Media are not treated here as neutral channels of information, but as key arenas in which democratic values, political authority, and participation are framed, contested, and evaluated. Mainstream media are often perceived as institutionally authoritative yet distant from citizens' everyday concerns, while digital platforms broaden opportunities for participation and visibility while simultaneously amplifying conflict, polarization, and distrust (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). Through these

media environments, citizens encounter democracy primarily as a communicative process rather than as direct institutional participation (Couldry & Hepp, 2018).

Empirically, participants articulate forms of reflective skepticism and selective engagement that emerge from these mediated experiences. Their strong attachment to democratic principles coexists with critical assessments of how democracy is represented, debated, and performed in the media. Rather than rejecting democracy, citizens negotiate its tensions by recalibrating how, when, and through which media they engage with political information and debate. These negotiations often take the form of practical strategies, such as cross-checking news sources, avoiding overly polarized discussions, or selectively participating in online debates, highlighting the active role citizens play in managing their own democratic experience.

By conceptualizing the democratic paradox as a mediated and experiential phenomenon, this paper contributes to debates on democratic legitimacy, political trust, and everyday civic engagement. It highlights the central role of media in shaping not only citizens' evaluations of democratic performance, but also the practices through which democratic commitment is sustained under conditions of communicative complexity.

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ARS07 News Consumption and Public (Dis-)Connection

PP 0324 From urban vision to action: Paths between media engagement and civic participation

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Adopting a constructivist perspective (Burr, 2015), this study investigates the relationship between subjective media engagement and civic participation. Focusing on the audience of a social media account dedicated to improving the urban environment in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, the study explores the construction of civic participation as a meaningful act for its performers and how this meaning can emerge from the subjective, situated process of media engagement. To do this, I follow Dahlgren and Hill's (2020) model of media engagement parameters which conceives of engagement as "an energising internal force … that can propel us to do things" (p. 2). The parameters include the context of engagement, its motivations, modalities, intensities, and consequences. I also employ Dahlgren's (2009) circuit of civic cultures, that is, the resources that facilitate engagement and participation, consisting of knowledge, practices, spaces, identities, values, and trust. This framework supports the exploration of the symbolic and material contingencies of participation.

The data for this study were generated in 18 semi-structured interviews with followers of the account who self-identified as wanting to or having acted to change the urban environment. The differentiation between and the inclusion of these two sets of people allows the study to address not only the account's influence on people's behavior, but also the possible constraints or obstacles that people may encounter in the process of changing their behaviour. The participants constitute a combination of a convenience and volunteer sample, with the latter recruited via posts shared by the social media account itself. The data were subjected to an abductive reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Thompson, 2022).

The findings show that participants' engagement with the account involves multifaceted and multidirectional influences. The account provides a lens for experiencing and interpreting the urban environment, with many describing a 'click' when the content enabled them to reassess familiar spaces and norms, like parking practices and car-centered mobility. Although learning about existing conditions often produces frustration, affective responses also include hope that, as a group of like-minded and motivated people, change is achievable. This relates to the emergence of a communicative space that connects people who would otherwise not meet. The account also offers knowledge and skills, as participants gain information and learn to engage in practices that strengthen their civic agency. Finally, the analysis suggests that beyond the six elements of the circuit of civic cultures (Dahlgren, 2009), the relationship between engagement and participation is contingent upon the cultivation of a particular imaginary. On the account pages, participants encounter a vision and a vocabulary for an alternative future that feels entirely possible, and it fosters the belief that, as citizens, they can achieve it.

ARS07 News Consumption and Public (Dis-)Connection

PP 0325 Mapping the social space: Information-oriented media practices and societal values in Germany

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Practices of public communication enable people to perceive, evaluate and participate in social and political realities and processes (Hasebrink 2020). In particular, using media can help individuals to develop ideas and notions of what social life should look like and what kind of values a society should strive for (or reject). To better understand the shifting grounds of contemporary society in terms of media transformation as well as value shifts such as challenged democratic ideals and the rise of authoritarian attitudes, it is crucial to examine the relationship between media use and societal values. Both aspects are essentially social phenomena that must be properly examined taking into account the social stratification of society at various levels.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1987) work on social differentiation through three main kinds of capital- economic, cultural and social- this project identifies segments of German society that are characterized by specific information-oriented media use and attitudes towards society. By analyzing variables of social position, information-oriented media use and societal values, the German population is visually structured according to these three factors.

Building on a representative population survey in Germany (N = 8.876, 2021), a multiple correspondence analysis based on chi-square statistics is applied to visualize different social positions within society as two-dimensional space, using a set of active variables of economic, cultural and social capital. Subsequently, information-oriented usage of different categories of media (e.g., local or national newspaper outlets; commercial or public-service broadcasting; social media accounts of political, journalistic or celebrity actors) and indicators of societal values (e.g., democratic, egalitarian, liberal, authoritarian or populist attitudes) were projected onto that social space as passive variables.

The results illustrate that a higher frequency of information-oriented media use corresponds with larger amounts of all three kinds of capital and vice versa. Populist attitudes, on the other hand, increase with lower levels of capital overall. However, informational use of social media is rather associated with an average amount of overall capital and a tendency towards higher levels of cultural and social capital than economic capital. Low levels of economic capital correspond with the non-usage of public service media and the rejection of democratic and liberal values. Authoritarian attitudes receive more approval at low levels of cultural and social capital, while they decrease at high levels. This also corresponds to the non-usage and frequent usage of newspaper outlets respectively.

The project illustrates that segments of society less equipped with societal resources use public communication practices less frequently and hold rather disintegrative and disruptive notions of society. Further differentiation could be made by identifying specific combinations of the three aspects (as exemplified above) through the visualization of multiple correspondence analysis, presenting one approach to structuring the German population. The proposed presentation contributes to the overall theme of the ECREA 2026 by demonstrating how disciplinary and methodological openness can help to analyze and further understand the shifting grounds of society and its associated challenges in terms of media practices and societal values.

ARS07 News Consumption and Public (Dis-)Connection

PP 0326 Hope for public life through social media disconnection

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Disconnection from digital and social media has emerged both as a coping strategy for the pressures of everyday digital life (Talvitie-Lamberg et al. 2024) and as a key skill for responsible digital citizenship (Kaun 2021; Vanden Abeele & Mohr 2021). At the same time, critical media and data research shows that many people struggle with platform demands yet feel increasingly excluded from democratic society (Nikunen et al., forthcoming). A broader decline in societal belonging suggests that citizens are becoming frozen out of society (Fenton et al. 2023; Latzer et al. 2025). Against this backdrop, it is vital to understand how digital disconnection shapes experiences of belonging in public life. We investigate how social media disconnectors define public life and how appealing alternative forms of participation are to those who voluntarily withdraw, situating our analysis within research on digital disconnection and public life in a Nordic data welfare context (Andreassen et al. 2021; Syvertsen et al. 2014), where digital and social media increasingly reshape what belonging means. Our guiding research question is: "How do social media disconnectors understand and experience belonging and agency in public life?"

We use hope as our theoretical lens. Hope involves longing, a sense of incompleteness in the present, entailing agency and an orientation toward a better future (Bugajska 2024). Hope may help explain why people disconnect from social media. Previous research shows that, although people disconnect for various reasons, their often do so in hopes of achieving

something specific: increasing well-being, mitigating the ill-being caused by digital environments, being more present offline, avoiding distraction, or escaping the social pressure to be online (Gilbert et al., 2025; Nguyen & Hargittai, 2025, Ngyen 2023). While much research frames disconnection at the individual level, recent research calls for more socially and politically informed perspectives (Enli & Fast 2023) that would recognise collective aspirations for a better society (Kania-Lundholm 2021). We therefore explore social media disconnectors experiences of public life through the concept of hope which involves a belief in a common good worth striving for (Bugajska 2024).

Our study, which draws on thematic interviews and media diaries from young adults, refugee-background immigrants, journalists, and academic leaders (N = 64) in a Nordic welfare state, analyzed through situational analysis (Clarke et al., 2017; 2022), shows that disconnection is not merely an individual coping strategy that reshapes one's self-understanding. Rather, disconnection was viewed as a moral obligation with the hope of prompting collective-level consequences for reshaping communication cultures on social media. Our study reveals that opting out of social media does not equate to withdrawing from society (Adams & Jansson, 2021). Rather, opting out can strengthen one's sense of agency and meaningful participation in public life.

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ARS07 News Consumption and Public (Dis-)Connection

PP 0327 News avoidance and public connection in the context of the German federal election campaign

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In democratic societies, news media act as a connective force between individuals and the public by providing political information and enabling political opinion formation and participation (Schudson, 2008; Swart et al., 2017). This is particularly evident during election periods when the demand for political information is high, even among segments of society that tend to be rather disengaged from political issues (Andersen et al., 2021). At the same time, the omnipresence and redundancy of political information during such periods may increase the risk of news avoidance due to issue fatigue (Gurr & Metag, 2022). News avoidance can pose a challenge for democracy when it reflects a lasting detachment from the news and the political sphere (Palmer & Toff, 2020; Toff & Nielsen, 2022). However, intentional news avoidance that occurs alongside regular news consumption may also serve as a coping strategy for managing information overload or negative emotional effects, which can potentially foster rather than hinder political engagement (Ohme et al., 2023; Woodstock, 2014). Therefore, to assess the democratic implications of news avoidance, it is essential to systematically differentiate between distinct types of news avoidance and consider their varying causes (Newman et al., 2025; Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2022). Drawing on the concept of public connection (Couldry et al., 2007; Swart et al., 2017), this study examines the relationship between different types of news avoidance and individuals' connection to the national public sphere during an election campaign.

The study is based on a survey of the German adult online population (N = 2,047) conducted as part of the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2025). Data were collected between mid-January and the end of January 2025, ahead of the early German federal elections. Following previous research (Betakova et al., 2025; Damstra et al., 2023; Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2022), the analysis distinguishes between consistent news avoidance, defined as low levels of news consumption, and intentional news avoidance that occurs alongside regular news use. Public connection is analyzed across multiple dimensions (Hasebrink et al., 2023): the feeling of connection to Germany and its population (affective dimension), the perception of the most important problem in Germany (e.g., immigration, climate change) (cognitive dimension), and political participation (e.g., demonstrating, volunteering) (action-oriented dimension).

Preliminary results indicate that patterns of public connection vary, at least in part, depending on the type of news avoidance. While both consistent news avoidance and intentional news avoidance that occurs alongside regular news consumption are associated with lower levels of emotional belonging to the German public, intentional news avoidance is not related to diminished political participation. Further analyses will explore the relationship between news avoidance and public connection while accounting for additional relevant factors, such as reasons for intentional news avoidance and political orientation. Overall, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the democratic implications of news avoidance in times of political disruption.

ARS07 News Consumption and Public (Dis-)Connection

PP 0328 Understanding news avoidance repertoires in Spain: A multidimensional and behavior-specific approach

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Research on news avoidance has grown recently, though not without ongoing theoretical debates. This paper seeks to advance a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon by examining not only general intentional news avoidance but also the specific behaviors through which individuals limit their news exposure. Drawing on the Digital News Report data for Spain (N = 2,031), we conduct logistic regression analyses to explore how individual-level factors predict both general and specific forms of intentional news avoidance.

Our approach distinguishes between eight specific avoidance practices—ranging from very selective behaviors (e.g., avoiding certain news sources or topics) to more indiscriminate strategies (e.g., turning off notifications or checking the news less frequently). This variety captures a spectrum of coping strategies that audiences employ to navigate an overwhelming and often untrustworthy media environment (Andersen et al., 2024; Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020).

Our findings show that no single model explains all news avoidance behaviors. Instead, each practice is shaped by a distinct combination of sociodemographic factors, political attitudes, and media-related perceptions. While younger people, women, and those with lower education are more likely to generally avoid news, these variables do not uniformly predict specific behaviors. Notably, strategies like reducing notifications or limiting news consumption at specific times are significantly more widespread among highly educated and politically interested individuals.

Crucially, concern about fake news emerges as a consistent predictor of four avoidance behaviors—avoiding certain topics, avoiding specific sources, reducing the frequency of news checks, and prioritizing non-news activities—suggesting that news avoidance may act as a situational strategy of self-protection against disinformation (Wenzel, 2019; Hasell & Halversen, 2024). Political ideology also plays a key role: individuals on the right are more likely to generally avoid news, while far-right voters tend to engage in targeted avoidance of ideologically incongruent sources.

This study contributes to ongoing theoretical debates by demonstrating that news avoidance is not a uniform phenomenon but rather a repertoire of context-sensitive practices. We argue that understanding the motivational, social, and structural diversity behind news avoidance is key to developing effective audience engagement initiatives. Indeed, our findings align with recent literature that moves beyond the notion of a uniform news avoider and call for disaggregated, behavior-specific approaches that account for audience agency within digital, platformized, and polarized media systems.

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ARS09 Audiovisual Audience Practices

PP 0550 "Have you also seen this video?" – Assessing content overlap in YouTube watch histories among dyads of friends and strangers using data donations

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Today, many young people consume media content primarily through intermediary platforms such as YouTube. These platforms offer access to large amounts of diverse content produced by many different creators. As a result, each person is exposed to a unique set of content, depending on the available content, personal characteristics (e.g., interests), personalization algorithms, and the social context (Thorson & Wells, 2016). This raises the question of how much content overlap exists between users on a specific platform, both in a larger population and between friends. However, empirically identifying overlap of the media use histories of specific individuals within a certain demographic group is difficult and thus rarely done. This study addresses this gap by exploring *to what extent content overlap can be observed on YouTube among young users and which factors are related to greater content overlap* based on a mixed-method design combining survey-based self-reports with YouTube data donations.

Participants were recruited through Instagram Ads targeted at people aged 18 to 25 living in [ANONYMZED] and then asked to invite a friend to also take part in the study. This resulted in a sample of 296 participants (M_age = 20.7, N_female = 128) with 134 individuals being part of a friend-dyad and 162 participants without social ties to other participants. Participants answered a questionnaire covering sociodemographics, YouTube use, and content interests. Additionally, participants donated their watch histories and channel subscription lists by downloading their YouTube data from the Google takeout page and uploading them through the data donation tool *DDM*.

The analysis focused on the watch activities within a 65-day period ranging from October to December 2023 covered by all watch histories. In this period, participants watched 256,258 unique videos (Median = 493) of which 19.5% were watched by more than one person and the most popular video occurred in 31.3% of watch histories. To explore the extent of content overlap and its predictors, we calculated the Szymkiewicz-Simpson coefficient (i.e., the fraction of videos watched by the participant with fewer watched videos that the other participant has also watched) for all possible dyads in the sample (43,956 dyads including 67 friend-dyads). We did so for *watched videos* (M = 0.02; M_friend-dyads = 0.05), *watched channels* (M = 0.11; M_friend-dyads = 0.22), and *subscribed channels* (M = 0.04; M_friend-dyads = 0.10).

For each overlap measure, we performed a bootstrapped fractional logit regression (2,000 bootstrap samples consisting of 120 dyads; 60 friend- and 60 non-friend-dyads) incorporating demographic similarity (age, gender, education), interest similarity, and friendship status as predictors. Being friends was the strongest predictor of a higher content overlap in all three models.

Our results demonstrate that the content overlap on YouTube, even among users belonging to a relatively narrow socio-demographic group, is rather small while also highlighting the importance of social ties for the explanation of content overlap. The study offers important and thus far lacking insights into the extent of content overlap on YouTube among demographically similar individuals. The presentation will discuss these results, the methodology, and its limitations in more detail.

ARS09 Audiovisual Audience Practices

PP 0551 Advancing data donation as a scalable method for studying digital media trends: A Danish YouTube case study

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High-choice media environments are marked by individualization and audience fragmentation, blurring boundaries between creators and users (Sullivan 2020). At the same time, researchers face growing restrictions in studying digital media behavior, as many platforms have limited API access since the Cambridge Analytica scandal, leading Bruns (2019) to announce the 'APIcalypse'. Yet, in a context where citizens' everyday lives are increasingly recorded (Lazer et al. 2021), developing and assessing new methods for collecting and analyzing digital media data remains essential. Such methods can help address questions about how digital platform users are influenced and by whom. Investigating research questions that "require systematic, unbiased, individual-level data" (De Vreese and Tromble 2023, p.356) is challenging under current conditions. Consequently, user centric alternatives to API access, such as tracking or data donation, are gaining importance—though data donation is rarely applied at scale.

This paper presents a new – donation centric- approach for scaling data donation to a national population level to understand media usage trends and discuss challenges for digital democracies, focusing on Denmark as a representative case of a Democratic Corporatist media system (Olesen 2020). Building on existing data donation research (e.g., Breuer et al. 2023; Welbers et al. 2024; Ohme et al. 2024; Van Driel et al. 2022), it introduces a method for applying data donation at scale to collect information from a YouTube population.

The study collected data donations from 1,068 adult Danish YouTube users, recruited via quotas for age, gender, and education aligned with the adult Danish YouTube user population. Donations included search and watch histories, subscriptions, and data on comments. The study was implemented in four consecutive steps between August and December 2024, concluding with a post-survey on media use, political attitudes, health, and personality traits. The first component screened participants and obtained consent; the second and third instructed them to request, download, and donate their YouTube data.

We present the study design and discuss implications for data quality, focusing on sample composition and dropout across components. Findings from logistic regressions confirm lower participation and donation likelihood among older users, partly due to technical barriers. Men show a slightly higher tendency to complete participation and donate data than women, while educational level has no effect. Besides socio-demographic factors, we find evidence for trust and YouTube usage in general affecting the likelihood to consent and donate data. Dropout analyses are evaluated regarding data quality and implications for applying the method in other contexts are discussed.

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ARS09 Audiovisual Audience Practices

PP 0552 Micro-mobility and attention in the age of the appisation of television: Emerging viewing cultures across screens

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The "appisation" of television—the integration of apps as a primary mode of accessing television content via smart TVs, connected devices, smartphones, and tablets (Johnson, 2020)—has reshaped television viewing cultures and audience practices. While the internet era is often associated with multitasking (Carrier et al., 2009; Kätsyri et al., 2016) and distracted media consumption (Hassoun, 2019), television occupies a distinctive position within this environment. Rather than rendering the television set obsolete, appisation enables television content to circulate across an extended ecology of screens while maintaining continuity through personalised profiles and app-based infrastructures.

The research in this abstract explores how appisation influences everyday TV audience viewing cultures and practices. There is an emergence of cultures and practices characterised by continuity, mobility, and variable attention. As television content "travels" with viewers across devices, rooms, and geographical locations, audiences engage in what is conceptualised here as a culture of micro-mobility—short, everyday movements between screens and activities that allow viewers to sustain engagement with content without being anchored to a single viewing context. These practices complicate binary distinctions between attentive and distracted viewing (Hassoun, 2019), revealing attention as a negotiated and situational process.

The study draws from data from my first-year PhD qualitative audience research, "Exploring TV Audience Viewing Cultures in the Streaming Era", based in Tallinn, Estonia. Eighteen pilot interviews were conducted in March and April 2025 with three audience groups: Estonian-speaking Estonians, Russian-speaking Estonians, and expatriates (English- and Russian-speaking) aged 18–45 (Gen Z and Millennials). The research design and interview questions were based on a modified framework of TV as a technological and cultural form (Johnson, 2019). Questions were divided into five sections, asking participants about: devices, content, services, frames, and marketing channels. Two types of interview methods were employed: narrative interviews (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Frost, 2009), for participants who could talk more freely about their TV consumption habits and semi-structured interviews, for the participants who struggled to talk. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) was used to analyse the data.

The findings revealed a significant correlation between activities, content, and devices—a phenomenon I refer to as micro-mobility, characterised by participants (regardless of their audience group) transitioning between activities, rooms, or devices while engaging with content. Viewers strategically pair high-attention content with low-attention activities, while more ambient or familiar content accompanies tasks requiring greater focus. The device used is often determined by the level of mobility and the size of the audience. Though at times participants moved from room to room with their device, at times they moved the same content from one device to another, e.g. phone to TV. Other factors also come into play: for instance, the logic of daily activities determines the device and content, e.g. cooking while watching trash political content on a tablet, then eating while watching a series that the whole family is watching on TV.

This study contributes to Audience and Reception Studies by advancing the study of television in the streaming era and emerging viewing cultures, such as micro-mobility, continuity and variable attention.

ARS09 Audiovisual Audience Practices

PP 0553 Rally audiences, platform participation and narrative negotiation in televised coverage

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Motorsport broadcasting offers a productive empirical site for examining how contemporary audiences operate as active participants in the circulation, interpretation, and transformation of media texts. Drawing on theories of audiences as performers (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998), convergence culture (Jenkins, 2006), and communicative agency in a datafied media environment (Ytre-Arne & Das, 2021), this paper explores how rally fans engage with and rework live broadcast content across social media platforms.

The analysis is based on recordings of televised rally coverage from the 2025 World Rally Championship season, combined with qualitative discourse analysis of interactions in fan groups during and after the broadcasts. These online spaces function as hybrid arenas where official coverage is shared, contested, and recontextualised. Fans actively frame moments of drama and controversy, circulate highlights, and negotiate interpretations of events, contributing to the construction of rally narratives beyond the broadcast itself.

Conceptually, the paper engages with debates surrounding the "end of audiences" (Livingstone & Das, 2013) by demonstrating how distinctions between producers and consumers are increasingly blurred through platform-based participation. Rally fans' practices exemplify collective forms of communicative agency shaped by platform affordances and data infrastructures, situating audience participation within processes of platformisation (van Dijck, 2013) and deep mediatization (Hepp, 2020). At the same time, these practices must be understood within the ambivalent political economy of digital media. Drawing on notions of free labour (Terranova, 2000) and the audience commodity (Smythe, 1977), the paper situates fan participation as unpaid cultural production that generates value for platforms and rights-holding broadcasters.

Ultimately, by mobilising Couldry's (2016) concept of the media manifold, the paper shows how rally fandom unfolds across interconnected media environments where television, social platforms, and data-driven infrastructures intersect. The findings highlight tensions between institutional media power (Castells, 2009) and grassroots meaning-making, revealing how participatory practices simultaneously reproduce and challenge dominant broadcast narratives.

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ARS09 Audiovisual Audience Practices

PP 0554 The representation of queer TV characters and their significance for the identity of queer audiences: A qualitative reception analysis

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Queer representation in the media has historically been marginalized and stereotyped, negatively affecting the identity development of queer audiences. Recent shifts toward more nuanced and affirming portrayals open new potentials for identity exploration, validation, belonging, and emotional support. Research shows that parasocial relationships with such representations can be particularly meaningful for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Bond, 2023). This study investigates how queer audiences experience queer representation in Netflix's Heartstopper, how they relate to its characters, and which role these portrayals play in identity development and belonging.

The theoretical framework draws on D'Augelli's (1994) model of LGB identity development, conceptualizing identity across six dynamic processes: *exiting a heterosexual identity, developing a personal LGB identity status, developing an LGB social identity, claiming identity as an LGB offspring, developing an LGB intimacy status,* and *entering an LGB community.* Second, the study builds on McMillan and Chavis' (1986) Sense of Community model, which conceptualizes belonging through four interrelated components: *membership, influence, needs fulfillment,* and *shared emotional connection.*

The study is based on 16 semi-structured interviews with queer individuals aged 18–55 and analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2024). Four overarching themes emerged: (1) *Recognition in realistic representation,* (2) *Parasocial experiences of acceptance,* (3) *Characters as sources of guidance and empowerment,* and (4) *Safe spaces in fiction and reality.*

(1) Recognition in realistic representation

Participants described the characters as authentic and emotionally complex, forming strong parasocial bonds. Many recognized their own identities, struggles, and coming-out experiences. The portrayal of distressing experiences was painful for some participants, yet it was regarded as essential for achieving a realistic depiction.

(2) Parasocial experiences of acceptance

Some viewers experienced the series as idealized, especially regarding acceptance and support within families, friendships, and school environments. Nevertheless, these idealized portrayals created feelings of acceptance, emotional comfort, and helped reducing internalized homophobia. Heartstopper modelled desirable realities and provided an emotional substitute space, where viewers could witness openness and support.

(3) Characters as sources of guidance and empowerment

Participants viewed the main characters as emotional anchors and role models. They offered guidance on self-disclosure, relationships, and mental health and encouraged resilience, identity exploration, and self-reflection. This theme highlights the educational and empowering function of the series.

(4) Safe spaces in fiction and reality

Heartstopper served as a parasocial safe space and "comfort series," helping viewers regulate emotions, process past experiences, and find reassurance. Beyond the fictional world, it strengthened social connectedness through fan communities and supportive networks. This theme demonstrates how narrative spaces can foster personal and collective belonging.

Overall, Heartstopper supports queer identity across multiple aspects of D'Augelli's model by encouraging self-reflection, -exploration and -acceptance, by validating identity and by motivating coming-out and modeling affirming relationships and communities. Although the series plays a minor role in political engagement or broader community involvement, it fosters an individual sense of belonging and fan-community with shared symbols, emotional connections, and a sense of belonging. These findings underscore the importance of multidimensional, realistic, and hopeful LGBTQIA+ representation for identity development and emotional well-being.

ARS10 Algorithmic Curation and Platform Power

PP 0555 Automating publics: A multi-level framework for analysing algorithmic public formation

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This paper advances a conceptual framework for analysing how publics are shaped through and across personalised, datafied, and hybrid media infrastructures. The increasing implementation of AI-driven and personalised content recommender systems across the media industry raises fundamental questions about how algorithmic curation reconfigures citizens' engagement with issues of public concern. While existing scholarship has typically examined personalisation and in particular News Recommender Systems (NRS's) at the level of single platforms or single news outlets- often focusing on measurable effects such as click behaviour or the values inherent in the design of NRS- there is a lack of theoretical frameworks capable of explaining how automated media environments reshape public formation and linking these developments *across* individual, organisational, and societal levels. This article mobilizes previous literature on three levels combining audience studies with issue publics theory and media sociological approaches to develop the framework:

At the **micro level**, the model conceptualises personalised media use as a communicative practice of decoding within what we term *personalised mediascapes*: cross-platform flows of content characteristic of contemporary, datafied, hybrid media environments. Building on encoding/decoding theory (Hall, 1991) and research on media experiences, this level highlights how individuals interpret personalised content normatively and emotionally. At the **meso level**, the model includes personalization algorithms as *algorithmic assemblages* (Ananny, 2019) and the cultural dimensions of algorithms, conceptualizing NRSs as socio-technical systems that encode normative values and organisational imaginaries into processes that match users with public issues. This builds on previous work showing that personalisation systems embed assumptions about users and their concerns. Through "ethnographies of algorithms," this level captures how personalisation collapses traditional boundaries between encoding and decoding as aggregated user data become integral to producing personalised content flows. Finally, at the **macro level**, the model mobilises the concept of *issue publics*(Dewey, 1927) to theorise how algorithmically distributed content shapes collective attention, controversies and the emergence of public issues. In contrast to platform-specific notions such as networked (boyd, 2011) or calculated publics (Gillespie, 2014), issue publics emphasise how shared stakes in problems generate publics across media sites and institutional arenas with algorithmic systems as co-constituting actors in both media production and media use. We show how this perspective enables analysis of how automated media modulates the visibility, articulation, and coherence of issues across the broader media ecology.

Finally, the article discusses how these levels can be linked, and how researchers can approach the analysis of algorithmic public formation empirically and methodologically.

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ARS10 Algorithmic Curation and Platform Power

PP 0556 One of many voices: Understanding the role of journalists through news users' personal curation practices

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As news users, specifically young adults, increasingly turn to social media for news, they navigate an environment in which journalistic, non-journalistic, and alternative voices blend (Newman et al., 2025). Within this environment, journalists no longer operate as primary gatekeepers but compete with a wide range of other actors for news users' limited attention. This raises questions about whether, how, and when these news users still assign authority to journalists (Carlson, 2017).

At the same time, social media users have become increasingly autonomous in managing their information exposure. Faced with an abundance of content, users actively shape their media environments through personal curation practices, defined as "the active and intentional customization of one's media environment in pursuit of individual goals" (Thorson & Wells, 2016, p. 316). Through everyday actions such as (un)liking, (un)following, or muting content, users now construct personalized news feeds aligned with their interests, emotional needs, and values (Merten, 2021; Thorson & Wells, 2016). As a result, each news user assembles their unique everyday news intake.

Against this backdrop, this study examines how personal news curation practices shape the authority young adults assign to journalists within their self-curated news environments. Rather than treating journalistic authority as given or declining, the study investigates how journalistic authority is actively negotiated through everyday curation decisions. It asks how young adults regulate their exposure to news, and under which conditions journalists are included, excluded, or selectively relied upon. The study draws on a mixed methods 'data mirroring' approach: 21 participants (aged 18–24) donated their Instagram or TikTok Data Download Packages, which were filtered and visualized using '4CAT: Capture and Analysis Toolkit' to create individualized data mirrors of their most engaged news-related content over time. These visualizations were used as elicitation tools in in-depth interviews, enabling participants to reflect more accurate on their media behaviour.

The findings show that these young adults curate their news feeds in pursuit of a personalized news '*comfort zone*' that is both meaningful and emotionally manageable. They engage in a constant balancing act between protecting their autonomy through self-curation and selectively granting journalists access to their curated spaces. While journalistic content is often avoided when perceived as negative or overwhelming, journalists remain valued as sources of *clarity*, *credibility*, and *diversity* when users seek explanation in times of confusion. These findings highlight journalism's ambivalent yet persistent role within young adults' current news experience and show how journalistic authority is negotiated through everyday personal curation practices in a digital news ecosystem shaped by both user and platform logics.

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ARS10 Algorithmic Curation and Platform Power

PP 0557 Imagining culture and technology: Audience reflections on algorithmic curation in everyday life and at the museum

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This paper explores how audiences imagine and negotiate the role of algorithmic recommendation and curation systems in everyday media use as well as cultural institutions. In times of transformation, as technologies such as algorithmic recommendation systems are implemented across both commercial media and public cultural institutions, audiences are seldom

invited to articulate how they imagine these systems should be used; instead, they navigate, respond to, and adapt within evolving media environments.

The paper presents findings from two creative workshops conducted in collaboration with ACMI, the Museum of Screen Culture, in Melbourne, Australia (spring 2025). I will highlight methodological reflections, exploring the use of creative methods to approach abstract phenomena such as algorithms as well as crucial choices regarding sampling. The study draws on two so-called "playshops", creative workshops inspired by and developed in cooperation with Caitlin McGrane & Larissa Hjorth (2025) to "use play to enhance and enrich critical creative reflective thinking and self-reflection". Each workshop had nine participants and included three creative activities: 1) a visit to the exhibition to interact with the museum's digital collection discovery device, 2) writing postcards about algorithmic understanding, and 3) drawing individual maps of people's everyday media use. Participants were recruited through distinct strategies to capture diverse perspectives: Workshop 1 involved non-visitors with mixed educational backgrounds, while Workshop 2 engaged loyal museum members with higher education levels. Comparing these groups illuminates how everyday algorithmic imaginaries (Bucher, 2017) intersect with other attitudes towards culture and entertainment, as well as institutional trust.

Through the playshops, participants had the opportunity to explore the presence of algorithmic recommendations in their everyday lives and eventually expressed ambivalent attitudes. While they valued features such as search, recommendation, and personalization for their convenience and ability to facilitate content discovery, concerns about commodification and commercial platforms "pigeonholing" users dominated discussions. When considering algorithmic applications in museums, reactions were divided more strongly: some saw potential for personalized communication, while others resisted the idea, framing museums as "sacred" spaces for human connection where commercial technologies feel intrusive. This tension reflects a persistent cultural imaginary that positions technology as separate from culture—a view that contrasts with contemporary scholarship challenging such dichotomies (Peters, 2016; Striphas, 2023).

The analysis reveals and analyses the juxtapositions and tensions expressed by participants. Especially at the Museum of Screen Culture, which mediates film, video games, and digital art, this distinction seems to stem from a deeper understanding, or rather values, that might not match with peoples' lived realities.

The findings contribute to audience studies with methodological reflections as well as by highlighting how people negotiate the growing presence of algorithmic systems in everyday media use as well as cultural institutions. They reveal a clear distinction most participants draw between museums, culture, and technology—echoing the classic nature–culture–technology triad—while also exposing contradictions between discourse and experience. The paper argues for a more nuanced understanding of how audiences imagine and engage with algorithmic mediation in contexts beyond commercial media.

ARS10 Algorithmic Curation and Platform Power

PP 0558 Navigating algorithmic power: Audience strategies for discoverability and cultural sovereignty in digital media ecosystems

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In this presentation, we analyse how young adult users navigate algorithmically governed media environments and the strategies they employ to maintain autonomy in content discoverability. Platforms such as Instagram, Netflix, Spotify,YouTube, among others increasingly govern how audiences discover audiovisual content through algorithmic recommendations, raising questions about how audiences assert agency and develop strategies to discover content within algorithmically curated environments. Drawing on more than 30 in-depth interviews conducted within the ALCOM Research Project (PID2023-1-48682OA-I00 – funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities), this study explores the conscious and unconscious tactics users adopt to negotiate algorithmic influence while constructing personalised audiovisual experiences.

Our analysis addresses three core questions:

1. What practices do users employ for content discoverability?
2. How do they perceive and evaluate the role of algorithms in shaping their media diets?
3. How do they move across platforms, creating personalised journeys of discovery, validation, and consumption?

Findings reveal a spectrum of agency expressed through six distinct user journeys: (1) Total Algorithmic Acceptance, (2) Selective Internal Acceptance, (3) Guided Exploration, (4) Contrast with External Sources, (5) Critical Valuation, and (6) Autonomous Choice. These journeys illustrate varying degrees of engagement, from complete trust in platform recommendations to deliberate avoidance of algorithmic influence. Some users rely entirely on algorithmic suggestions for convenience, while others actively curate their feeds, seek external validation, or prioritise human recommendations over automated ones.

These varied practices demonstrate that user engagement with recommendation systems is far from uniform. While some embrace algorithmic suggestions, others resist or supplement them through external checks and human curation. This

latter typology therefore challenges deterministic views of algorithmic governance, showing that it does not uniformly diminish user autonomy but interacts with diverse strategies of negotiation and resistance.

Strategies include leveraging platform tools for targeted searches, cross-referencing recommendations with external sources, and constructing heuristic frameworks for critical evaluation. Furthermore, cross-platform practices such as verifying platform suggestions through trailers or reviews on other sites highlight how users integrate algorithmic, social, and critical signals to form independent judgments.

By mapping these journeys, the presentation contributes to debates on algorithmic power and user agency, offering a nuanced understanding of how cultural sovereignty is enacted in digital ecosystems. It argues that autonomy is not a binary condition but a dynamic negotiation shaped by technological affordances, social trust, and individual values.

Keywords

algorithmic curation, user agency, content discoverability, cross-platform practices, media literacy, cultural sovereignty

ARS11 AI and Audiences - Heat, Health and Hate

PP 0660 The paradoxical heat of Generative AI: Why a cool medium feels hot

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Generative AI (GenAI) represents a significant shift in how we interact with AI technologies. Users have historically engaged with AI indirectly through computational systems and interfaces that mediated the interaction. Now they communicate with AI directly through natural language, experiencing its fluent and contextually adaptive output as authoritative despite its well-documented tendency to produce plausible but factually incorrect responses. As a consequence, users frequently place a level of trust in GenAI output that exceeds its epistemic reliability. In this conceptual contribution, I argue that this tension arises from a widespread misperception of GenAI as a *paradoxically hot medium*.

Drawing on Marshall McLuhan's hot–cool media continuum, hot media deliver high-definition information that requires minimal audience participation, whereas cool media are low-definition and demand active interpretation to complete meaning (McLuhan & Gordon, 2003). In essence, hot and cool media differ in their informational density and, crucially, in their demandingness on recipients (Anton, 2014; Boulding, 1967). Dominant cultural and technical narratives frame AI as brain-like yet epistemically superior to human cognition, more rational, precise, and less prone to error (Campolo & Crawford, 2020; Floridi & Nobre, 2024). Interface and design choices actively humanize GenAI systems through conversational formats, affective rhetoric, and emotionally expressive language (Guzman & Lewis, 2020; Maeda & Quan-Haase, 2024), contributing to GenAI's perceived hotness as a medium.

To explain why this is a misperception, I draw on the thermosensory phenomenon of Paradoxical Heat Sensation (PHS) (Mitchell et al., 2023), in which the nervous system misinterprets cold temperature as heat on the skin. Just as sensory perception can diverge from physical reality, media temperature can diverge from underlying structure. GenAI produces precisely this misalignment: it appears hot while remaining fundamentally cool. GenAI outputs are uncertain, ambiguous, and often miscalibrated, requiring users to interpret, verify, and critically evaluate generated content on a case-by-case basis. Yet it appears hot through design choices that combine multiple cognitive and perceptual faculties at scale and speed. The fluency and surface-level reliability of outputs hide GenAI's probabilistic nature, making responses feel self-sufficient and authoritative. This impression obscures the demandingness of the medium. GenAI mimics hot media's defining characteristic- delivering information in ways that appear to require minimal audience participation- even though the underlying epistemic structure demands active interpretation. In McLuhan's terms, the medium feels hot because it appears to extend multiple human senses simultaneously in high definition, even though meaning remains underdetermined and participation remains necessary.

Critical scholarship has raised concerns that such dynamics erode epistemic truth and influence independent judgement (Hamed et al., 2024; Araujo et al., 2020). Yet the problem is not user incapacity, but the medium's deceptive appearance. By framing GenAI as a *paradoxically hot medium*, this paper shifts critique from user deficits to medium effects. Open questions remain. What would it take for GenAI systems to feel and look fundamentally cool, to signal their low-definition, probabilistic nature and invite active participation in meaning-making? This reframing invites new thinking about how to design GenAI interfaces that signal and enact its cool, low-definition nature.

ARS11 AI and Audiences - Heat, Health and Hate

PP 0661 Artificial intelligence–driven mental health chatbots: User perspectives on adoption, engagement, and privacy

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The global rise in mental health issues has increasingly highlighted the need for interventions that are accessible, efficient, and scalable. Artificial intelligence (AI) driven mental health chatbots such as Woebot, Wysa, and Tess are emerging as

technology-mediated tools that provide psychoeducation, mood tracking, and low-intensity mental health support (D'Alfonso, 2020; Prakash et al., 2020; Caldarini et al., 2022). These tools have the potential to complement traditional services and address persistent barriers, including affordability, social stigma, and limited availability of healthcare providers (Naslund et al., 2017; Lund et al., 2018).

Despite their growing visibility and potential benefits, user adoption and continued engagement with AI-driven mental health chatbots remain inconsistent. Prior research indicates that users frequently encounter challenges such as repetitive or impersonal interactions, limited perceptions of empathy, and reduced trust in AI-driven mental health solutions (Haque & Rubya, 2022). These experiences can shape how users engage with chatbots over time and may influence their willingness to rely on such systems for mental health support. Understanding users' perspectives on AI adoption, engagement, and privacy-related trade-offs is therefore essential for the development of interventions that are both effective and acceptable within technology-mediated mental healthcare contexts (Aceto et al., 2018; Krishnamoorthy et al., 2023). In addition, there is a need to examine how users themselves perceive processes of adaptation, everyday usage, sustained engagement, and potential privacy concerns when interacting with AI-driven mental health chatbots. This study is informed by two complementary theoretical frameworks: the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2) (Venkatesh et al., 2012) and Privacy Calculus Theory (PCT) (Culnan & Bies, 2003). UTAUT2 is employed to examine factors influencing adoption and use, including usability, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Privacy Calculus Theory provides an additional perspective by focusing on how users evaluate perceived benefits and perceived risks when deciding whether to share personal information with AI-driven technologies. Together, these frameworks allow for a more nuanced analysis of both adoption behaviour and privacy-related decision-making.

Furthermore, insights from ICT-mediated communication research are used to conceptualise AI-driven mental health chatbots as communicative agents rather than neutral technological tools. This body of research highlights the relational and interactive dimensions of chatbot use, emphasising how such systems can influence user engagement, decision-making processes, and the development of trust (D'Alfonso, 2020; Caldarini et al., 2022). This perspective enables an examination of how communication dynamics shape users' experiences of AI-mediated mental health support.

A qualitative research design was adopted, combining a literature review with semi-structured interviews conducted with Woebot users recruited through convenience sampling. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore participants' motivations for adoption, experiences of engagement, and views on privacy. Additional data sources included user narratives, reflective accounts, and chatbot interaction logs collected over a period of 15 days. The data were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify patterns related to adoption behaviour, privacy considerations, and communication dynamics. Particular attention was given to relational, cognitive, and trust-building aspects of user–chatbot interactions.

ARS11 AI and Audiences - Heat, Health and Hate

PP 0662 Audience hate and human-AI interpretive gaps in an influencer crisis

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Audiences increasingly participate in shaping the visibility, legitimacy, and moral accountability of influencers and brands. When influencers engage in perceived transgressions, online publics mobilize affect, judgement, and collective criticism, creating rich terrains for reception and meaning-making research. This study investigates how audiences construct hate and moral blame in response to the widely debated crisis involving Romanian influencer Sânziana Negru and Lidl. Building on research on influencer crises (Sng et al., 2019; Rynarzewska et al., 2025; von Mettenheim & Wiedmann, 2023), brand hate (Kucuk, 2021; Kumar et al., 2023; Odoom et al., 2024; Zhang & Laroche, 2020), and online aggression (Blitvich, 2024; Cmeciu, 2025; Droz-dit-Busset, 2022; Yasmin et al., 2025), we analyse Instagram comments collected before and after the influencer's deleted apology post.

We apply a three-tier hate typology (soft, moderate, hard) to examine how audiences evaluate the influencer's behaviour, negotiate responsibility, and expand their criticism from the individual to the partnering organization. To interrogate how meaning is captured (or lost) through computational tools, we compare human-coded interpretations with classifications produced by a large language model (LLM). The comparative analysis reveals significant human-AI divergences: human coders better identify contextual cues such as irony, cultural references, and moralizing discourse, whereas AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT-5) overestimate moderate hate and struggle with implicit, affectively nuanced evaluations (Ahmed et al., 2022; Breazu et al., 2024; Curry et al., 2024; Gillings et al., 2024). These discrepancies highlight how audiences articulate complex layers of judgement that resist reductive algorithmic categorization.

The findings contribute to audience and reception studies by showing how digital publics co-produce narratives of blame, negotiate moral expectations toward influencers and brands, and engage in affective participation during crisis events. Moreover, the human-AI comparison underscores the methodological stakes of studying audience discourse in an era where automated tools increasingly mediate what researchers and organizations perceive as "public sentiment." The study

calls for a critical integration of computational and human-centred approaches to better understand how audiences make sense of influencer transgressions and express antagonism in digital environments.

Keywords

digital reception, parasocial disillusionment, algorithmic interpretation

Selected references

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ARS11 AI and Audiences - Heat, Health and Hate

PP 0663 Explaining AI adoption in science communication: A comparative UTAUT analysis across scientists, communicators, intermediaries and citizens

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Rationale

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping science communication, affecting how scientific information is produced, mediated, and accessed within contemporary media environments (Guzman & Lewis, 2024; AUTHORS, 2025). Recent research has examined both the use of AI in science communication and how it is perceived by different actors. However, much of this work remains descriptive or focused on single actors, offering limited insights into the mechanisms underlying AI adoption across the broader science communication landscape.

We draw on six large-scale, national surveys conducted in Switzerland, covering six actor groups involved in the *production* (1. communication professionals working at research, higher education, or science-related organizations; 2. scientists), *intermediation* (3. Wikipedians; 4. science content creators; 5. science journalists), and *reception* (6. citizens) of science communication. The study builds on the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003), a well-established framework for explaining technology adoption across diverse contexts, and applies it to AI use in science communication using a comparative perspective. We assume that AI perceptions differ between experts and the public (Bao et al., 2024), making groups comparisons particularly interesting. We ask:

RQ1: To what extent does UTAUT explain AI adoption in science communication?

RQ2: How does the explanatory strength of UTAUT and its components vary across the six groups?

Methods and Data

Data collection spans November 2025 to March 2026, with respondents being recruited through collaborations with institutions, professional associations, and communities of practice, complemented by curated mailing lists, snowball sampling on social media platforms, and third-party polling companies. The study draws on data from 2,000 citizens, with expected samples of approximately 250 respondents for the other groups, except science content creators and science journalists, resulting in an estimated total sample of at least 3,000 respondents. All surveys are conducted in German, French, Italian, and partly in English.

Across all surveys we adapted the core UTAUT predictors *performance expectancy*, *effort expectancy*, *social influence*, and *facilitating conditions* using two items each (Venkatesh et al., 2003; 2012; cf. Trang et al., 2024). We measured *behavioral intention* and *use behavior* as outcome variables, as well as the moderators *age*, *gender*, and *use experience*. Items were adapted to the specific actor groups while preserving comparability.

Data analysis will rely on multi-group structural equation modeling to test the UTAUT hypothesis structure (RQ1) and analyze similarities and differences in explanatory power across groups (RQ2). The study has obtained ethical approval and is in the process of preregistration. The authors have not yet accessed the data.

Expected Contribution

This study offers theory-driven insights into AI adoption across key actor groups involved in the production, intermediation, and reception of science communication. By systematically comparing the explanatory power of UTAUT across actors, it contributes to a more differentiated understanding of AI-driven change in contemporary science communication. The comparative analysis will inform actor-specific approaches to supporting, training, and governing the adoption of AI, while also assessing the scope and limits of UTAUT by exploring additional factors that shape AI adoption.

ARS11 AI and Audiences – Heat, Health and Hate

PP 0664 Atmospheres of email spam

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As our online worlds shift and expand at an exponential speed, it is still worth considering technological features that already exists but are oftentimes hiding in plain sight. Email spam is one of these features whose continued existence illustrate an online reality mired by potential hazards that can potentially have implications on the offline reality. Although email spam is often recessed into the background or dismissed as digital noise, this paper will argue they still contain untapped insights in how media audiences are able to engage emotionally with digital media and how it shapes their perception on online content. The paper revolves around the central question: *What emotions do media users feel when encountering email spam and how are atmospheres of trust/distrust constituted?* Through qualitative interviews with Swedish residents, the study will explore how cultivated technological fluency and cultural contexts shape audiences' feelings and emotions when encountering email spam. It grounds itself in the theory of technological capital (Romele 2024), atmospheres (Böhme 2017), but also the notions of felt experiences around technology (Bucher 2018; Ruckenstein 2023) to elucidate how an experiential study on media audiences and email spam can offer new insights into how digital content is felt, interpreted, and perhaps resisted. This paper advances the idea that by gaining knowledge on audiences' perception on email spam, we can shed light on how digital media texts are able to generate an atmosphere of trust or distrust, which in turn may provide additional wisdom in countering practices of reality distortion such as dis/misinformation campaigns that have been rampant in contemporary society. It invites a discussion on how we might reframe digital spam –such as email spam in this case- not merely as a technical issue but shift towards an understanding that spam is in essence a cultural and affective phenomenon embedded in everyday media practices.

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ARS12 Trust, Disorder and Reception

PP 0665 Shifting grounds of gendered meanings. European youths' reception of serial dramas in transnational media environments

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Within contemporary media and audience studies, serial dramas have become a crucial lens through which to understand how cultural meanings surrounding gender and diversity are shaped, circulated, and debated. Through their long-form storytelling, character development, and sustained engagement with social themes, these narratives are recognised as dynamic cultural spaces in which questions of identity, relationships, and belonging are both mirrored and reinterpreted. In doing so, they bring together well-known gendered patterns and more progressive portrayals, reflecting the tensions that characterise current discussions about gender and diversity.

Drawing on research carried out within the EU research-action project GEMINI-Gender Equality though Media Investigation and New training Insights (CERV-2022-GE), this paper examines how these dynamics unfold among European upper secondary school students, focusing on their everyday engagement with serial dramas and on the ways such texts intersect with their understandings of gender-related issues.

Empirically, the study draws on 15 focus group interviews involving 190 students aged 16–19 in Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Romania. This qualitative, cross-national approach enables an exploration of three interconnected dimensions: 1) the social and cultural contexts shaping young students' attitudes toward gender; 2) their interpretations of how gender and diversity are represented in serial dramas; 3) and their perceptions of whether and how these narratives influence their views and behaviour.

Findings show that students are best understood as transnational audiences whose media repertoires combine globally circulating serial dramas with national productions, and that engagement with gender-related content is strongly mediated by family, peers, school environments, and digital networks. Two interconnected paradigms emerge. First, students value the "normalization" of diversity, appreciating representations that present gender and sexual diversity as ordinary and authentic rather than exceptional or overtly didactic. Second, participants articulate a discourse of "minimal media effects", emphasising that serial dramas rarely change their personal beliefs but instead tend to confirm existing viewpoints. However, rather than signalling media irrelevance, this limited influence points to subtle forms of connection, in which serial dramas offer emotional and symbolic resources that support everyday reflections on diversity.

By foregrounding audience interpretations on these shifting grounds, the paper contributes to audience and reception studies by showing how young people actively negotiate paths of meaning-making, and translate global media narratives into locally resonant understandings. In doing so, the study argues for a context-sensitive understanding of media influence, highlighting the role of serial dramas in fostering reflexive, if incremental, cultural change within uncertain and fragmented media environments.

ARS12 Trust, Disorder and Reception

PP 0666 Diffuse trust in times of polycrisis: Czech Television as keystone media

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Trust in media is essential for their ability to fulfill informational and integrative roles, especially during crises (Melki & Kozman, 2021; Usher, 2020). A body of research has explored trust in the media (Aharoni, 2025) and documented fluctuations in media trust under disruptive conditions (Adam et al., 2023; Knudsen et al., 2023), yet the reasons behind its stability in times of crisis remain unclear even though it was particularly public service media that tended to maintain stable trust during the recent polycrisis formed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of the war in Ukraine (Henig & Knight, 2023; Newman et al., 2020, 2021, 2022). We examine the causes of this stability and suggest a possible path for conceptualizing stable trust in public service media (PSM).

Drawing on and adapting the classical distinction between diffuse and specific support (Easton, 1975) for public institutions, we theorize that trust in PSM may either stem from long-term institutional significance (diffuse trust) or from short-term performance during crises (specific trust). Empirically, we conduct an exploratory case study focused on Czech Television, the Czech public service media, and investigate whether its stable trust reflects continuity in the drivers of trust or whether crises alter these effects, with some factors enhancing trust and others diminishing them, ultimately balancing each other out.

Using three representative cross-sectional surveys from the Czech Republic (2019, pre-crisis, N = 3,251; 2020, COVID-19 pandemic, N = 3,763; and 2022, war in Ukraine, N = 2,340) and hierarchical regression analysis, we analyze how socio-economic, media-related, and socio-political drivers (Fawzi et al., 2021; McLeod et al., 2017; Tsfati & Ariely, 2014) of trust in Czech Television evolved before and during the polycrisis. Media-related variables consistently exhibited the strongest positive drivers of trust, particularly trust in most media, trust in journalists, and adherence to normative standards of professional media work. News consumption frequency had only a marginal effect. Socio-economic factors were similarly marginal. Among socio-political variables, antipathy toward the European Union was the most persistent and intensive negative driver of trust, while other variables showed minor volatility or negligible effects.

Based on our analysis, we argue that the relative continuity of these drivers suggests that trust in Czech Television predominantly has a diffuse character, anchored in audiences' long-term experience and perceived societal value rather than short-term crisis performance. The composition of active drivers leads us to propose a modified concept of keystone media (Nielsen, 2015) as a tool for explaining and conceptualizing diffuse trust in PSM. In this view, trust in PSM acts as a nodal point within the media ecosystem, setting benchmarks for quality and professionalism through regulated, non-commercial governance. Furthermore, the everyday relevance behind diffuse trust may be rooted in programming beyond news including extensive locally produced educational and entertainment content delivered with situational adaptability to changing contexts. We also discuss the limits of keystone-based diffuse trust, which may stem from perceived politicization and bias among viewers who see PSM as favoring pro-European, pro-liberal, and pro-Western positions at the expense of national concerns.

ARS12 Trust, Disorder and Reception

PP 0667 Disordered social media use and eating disorders: A survey study on the role of self-objectification and body appreciation

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In the broad field of research on social media and body image, the question is increasingly arising as to how addictive forms of use, also known as disordered social media use (DSMU), are linked to the onset and persistence of eating disorders

(ED; Mader et al., 2023). In our study, we examine this relationship using a quota sample of German internet users. To gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms, we consider self-objectification and body appreciation as explanatory factors.

We understand self-objectification as the socio-culturally learned perception of one's own body as an object evaluated by third parties, which is often reinforced by the consumption of idealized media content (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Corresponding beliefs and behaviors can be reinforced by social media use (Watson et al., 2016), impair one's own body image, and are considered a risk factor for ED (Schaefer & Thompson, 2018). In contrast, a respectful view of one's own body reduces the risk of developing an ED (Linardon et al., 2022). Based on theoretical considerations and existing studies, we model the relationship between DSMU and ED as a serial mediation, whereby increased DSMU is associated with higher self-objectification, which, in turn, is related to less body appreciation and a higher risk of ED.

Method

A professional survey institute recruited a sample of 1,424 German internet users (quotation criteria: age, gender, region) via an online panel. Only social media users were included in the analysis (N = 1,358; average age: 43.0 years; 688 women, 662 men, 8 diverse). Validated scales were used, showing good reliabilities (Cronbach's $\alpha > .80$). The assumed serial mediation model was estimated using SPSS PROCESS (Model 6), and indirect paths were tested using bootstrapping.

Results

A significant effect of DSMU on ED was found: people who use social media in a disordered manner are more likely to show symptoms of ED. One explanatory factor for this is the increased self-objectification associated with DSMU. Our analysis shows that DSMU is associated with a stronger tendency to view one's own body as an object to be evaluated. Self-objectification is directly associated with an increased risk of ED and is also associated with less body appreciation, while a higher body appreciation is associated with fewer symptoms of ED. The indirect paths from DSMU via self-objectification to ED, and from DSMU via self-objectification and body appreciation to ED are also significant, so that self-objectification and body appreciation can be assumed to be explanatory factors (partial mediation) of the relationship between DSMU and ED.

Discussion

One limitation of our study is its cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causal conclusions. However, the effects examined are theoretically and empirically sound. One strength is the large quota sample, replicating the findings of earlier studies using smaller, less diverse samples. Valuable conclusions for future studies and preventive or therapeutic practice can be drawn from the correlation shown between DSMU and ED and in particular from the mediating effects of self-objectification and body appreciation.

ARS12 Trust, Disorder and Reception

PP 0668 Ambivalent use of technology and digital well-being: An audience-centered European perspective

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AbstractThe growing centrality of digital technologies in everyday life has intensified scholarly attention to digital well-being, particularly from an audience and reception perspective that foregrounds how users experience, interpret, and negotiate their everyday digital practices. This study examines the relationship between intensive technology use and perceived digital well-being among adult audiences, adopting a comparative European approach grounded in reception studies and Uses and Gratifications Theory. Drawing on data collected from more than 3,000 adult Internet users in Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom, the research explores how digital gratifications and adverse effects coexist across personal, professional, and social domains of everyday life. Rather than focusing exclusively on the intensity of technology use, the study emphasizes audiences' subjective perceptions and meanings, capturing both enabling dimensions—such as functionality, connectivity, and productivity—and problematic experiences, including perceived dependency, information overload, cognitive fatigue, and difficulties in maintaining boundaries between online and offline life. The study is conducted within the framework of the European University Alliance EUniWell, situating the analysis within a broader European context concerned with digital well-being, social impact, and responsible technology use. This cross-national perspective allows for the identification of shared patterns and contextual differences in how adult audiences relate to digital technologies across Europe. The findings reveal a markedly ambivalent reception of digital technologies among adult audiences. While digital media are widely perceived as essential resources for work organization, social connection, and everyday coordination, these benefits coexist with persistent concerns about constant connectivity and its effects on attention, autonomy, and well-being. Importantly, the results indicate that perceived digital well-being is not directly determined by the amount of technology use, but by how audiences manage and integrate digital media into their daily routines. By foregrounding audience experience and a European comparative perspective, this study contributes to audience and reception research by extending Uses and Gratifications Theory to account for ambivalence and negotiated outcomes in digital media use. It underscores the value of European university alliances such as EUniWell for advancing interdisciplinary and socially relevant

approaches to digital well-being and points to the importance of media literacy initiatives that support reflective, balanced, and sustainable forms of digital engagement.

ARS12 Trust, Disorder and Reception

PP 0669 "I'm reactionary like no other!" – Humor as a coping and well- being strategy among older adults struggling with digital media

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When interviewing Swedish citizens aged 75 and older (21 participants) about the challenges of having to handle digital devices in everyday life, both resistance to digitalization and a sense of loneliness became evident. Many interviewees seemed to manage these difficult feelings with humor, also those who had a computer or a smartphone and the sufficient skills to use them. They were critical of what they described as the "absurdly fast technological development" and called themselves "old fashioned", "reactionary", and "stupid", with a tangible sense of irony.

These older adults were all well aware that digital communication has become the default format for interaction between people and the welfare system in Sweden, as well as for solving everyday practical issues, such as parking, public transportation, and managing bank accounts. As a result, they relied heavily on so-called warm experts to navigate everyday life (Olsson & Viscovi 2018; Søgaard Nielsen 2025). Research shows that expressions of humor play an important role for those who feel excluded from opportunities to engage as citizens (Doona 2020), perhaps particularly so when individuals lack the digital skills and knowledge required for basic civic engagement.

This presentation aims to understand expressions of self-defeating (lowering), self-enhancing (boosting), and affiliative (social bonding) humor in the data, seen as variants of older adults' coping strategies (Damianakis & Marziali 2011). As humor is often multifaceted and ambivalent, the humor categories are investigated through the implicit emotions they encompass, connected to identity and community construction, with a special focus on senses of inclusion and exclusion. In this respect, the interviewees' use of dark humor is important to understand as it helps people to engage with the experience of loss, at least momentarily. Dark humor is not a superficial response, but "an attempt to articulate the impact of grief and ascribe meaning to loss" (Murray 2016: 55). However, dark, self-defeating humor might appear affiliative but can be harmful to one's self-esteem.

Hakkarainen (2012: 1211) briefly mentions that older adults use numerous images to describe themselves as non-users, articulated in humorous, self-deprecating manners, describing themselves as having "fallen off the boat" and being "past expiry date", but does not delve into the deeper meaning of such expressions. Life satisfaction studies more frequently address these issues but not from a citizenship perspective. There is a research gap to fill here.

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ARS13 Influence and Influencers in Digital Landscape

PP 0765 "Because he drives electric, I will too" – The impact of celebrities in advertising on consumer acceptance of electric vehicles

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Electric vehicles (EVs) are not fundamentally a new technology but are gaining social relevance due to global climate and environmental goals (Vimal et al., 2024. Political measures, such as the EU target to allow only zero-emission vehicles from 2035 (European Parliament, 2023), aim to speed up the shift to cleaner mobility and help fight climate change. Nevertheless, setbacks can be observed. For example, a decline in new EV registrations in Germany (ADAC, 2025). In addition to technical (Mpoi et al., 2023) and financial (Bhat et al., 2024) barriers as well as socio-economic factors (Yang et al., 2023), general consumer reluctance toward new technologies is a key obstacle to EV acceptance (Rahma et al., 2025). Targeted communication strategies may help reduce prejudices (Ouyang et al., 2020).

A common marketing strategy is celebrity endorsement. Celebrity endorsers can attract attention and influence attitudes as well as purchase and usage intentions (McCormick, 2016; Spry et al., 2011). Credibility and attractiveness are key mechanisms (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019). Although celebrity endorsement research is well-established (Bergkvist & Zhou, 2016), few studies examine celebrity endorsement effects on product innovations (Biswas et al., 2006), especially in innovative vehicle technologies (Myrick et al., 2019). Research on EV acceptance mainly addresses usage barriers (Yang et al., 2023), while communicative factors remain underexplored (Ouyang et al., 2020).

This study investigates whether celebrity advertising can increase EV acceptance. Theoretically, it integrates the Source Credibility Model (Hovland et al., 1953) and the Source Attractiveness Model (McGuire, 1985) into the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996). Credibility and attractiveness are assumed to positively influence perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, which in turn determine behavioral intentions toward EVs.

An online survey was conducted with N = 427 participants (M = 25.30, SD = 6.52, 50% female), aged 18 or older and holding a class B driving license. The stimulus was a commercial featuring former football coach Jürgen Klopp promoting an EV (*Opel Corsa-e*). Measures included testimonial credibility (α = .90) and attractiveness (α = .83), perceived usefulness (α = .90), perceived ease of use (α = .68) and behavioral intentions (α = .88) toward EVs. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling.

Model fit indices indicated a limited fit (χ^2/df = 4.59, RMSEA = .09, NFI = .79, CFI = .82). Credibility significantly affected perceived usefulness (β = 0.17, p = .006) and ease of use (β = 0.20, p = .003). Attractiveness had no effect on usefulness (β = 0.09, p= .162) or ease of use (β = 0.10, p = .156). Ease of use positively influenced usefulness (β = 0.21, p < .001). Neither usefulness (β = 0.76, p = .784) nor ease of use (β = 0.02, p = .844) predicted behavioral intentions.

In summary, the results emphasize the importance of celebrity credibility for evaluating innovative technologies. Behavioral intentions toward EVs, however, cannot be explained only by TAM constructs and are likely influenced by other external factors such as technical and financial barriers.

ARS13 Influence and Influencers in Digital Landscape

PP 0766 Performing victimhood, fueling outrage: audience negotiations of deservingness and victimhood in the Nordic welfare state through the scandalization of Danish influencer Cathrine Wichmand

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Influencer scandals have become key sites where online audiences negotiate moral norms and political values, including claims to victimhood. As social media influencers, they are highly visible and subject to constant public scrutiny, making them more susceptible to scandalization, particularly when their social position conflicts with dominant expectations of authenticity and deservingness (Enli, 2015; Trottier, 2019). Yet, influencers are rarely recognized as legitimate victims within processes of scandalization (Valenzuela-García et al., 2023). In a digital media context, scandals function as arenas where audiences debate transgressive acts and moral boundaries, often grounded in particular cultural and political contexts (Adut, 2008; Hammarlin, 2021). This paper examines how audiences negotiate moral and political norms, welfare deservingness and claims to victimhood through an influencer scandal in the context of the Nordic welfare state.

To explore these dynamics, this paper empirically focuses on the case of Danish influencer Cathrine Wichmand, who sparked moral outrage after revealing on Instagram that she, due to her ADHD diagnosis, received municipal aid for a personal assistant to support her work as a fashion entrepreneur. Although framed by Wichmand as an authentic disclosure, her claim to victimhood and deservingness of welfare support clashed with the national public's expectations of welfare recipients. As a result, it triggered a broader debate in Denmark on the deservingness of welfare support and privilege. Subsequent attempts to diffuse the backlash and reframe herself in legacy media as a victim of unjust online hate paradoxically intensified the scandalization process, highlighting the contested legitimacy of victimhood and deservingness.

Drawing on theories of influencer logic and authenticity (Kristensen & Jerslev, 2025; van Driel & Dumitrica, 2021), deservingness in the Nordic welfare state (Attewell, 2020) and the 'ideal victim' (Christie, 2018; Valenzuela-García et al., 2023), I argue that audiences actively negotiate and evaluate who can claim victimhood and deserves welfare support, based on the cultural expectations of vulnerability and respectability. Methodologically, the paper draws on a thematic analysis of the top 50 comments from six Reddit threads in r/InfluencergossipDK and r/GossipDK (n = 300), as well as the top 50 comments on the two Instagram posts in which Wichmand responded to her scandalization (n = 100).

Preliminary findings show that online audiences framed Wichmand as undeserving of support and inauthentic, arguing that she failed to acknowledge her perceived privilege and benefited from the system at the expense of others. As a result, her claim to victimhood was delegitimized in discussions across social media platforms. More broadly, this paper contributes to audience and reception studies by demonstrating how social media audiences negotiate welfare norms and victimhood. The case further highlights how influencer scandals make visible shifting boundaries of deservingness and the contested social position of influencers.

ARS13 Influence and Influencers in Digital Landscape

PP 0767 Simulating alternative and traditional media influence in a fragmented digital landscape

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This study presents an agent-based model that simulates the evolution of media trust and opinion dynamics within a competitive information landscape. The model builds on theories of cognitive rebalancing, social embeddedness, and influence hierarchies, while extending these perspectives with contemporary research on algorithmic gatekeeping, selective and incidental exposure, and influencer-driven persuasion in networked publics. Theoretically, it integrates classic accounts of conformity and spiral-of-silence dynamics with minority influence and credibility-based persuasion, allowing majority pressure, minority consistency, and trust asymmetries to operate simultaneously rather than in isolation. Agents in the model are characterized by a media preference and an attitudinal trait, and they update their states through three interdependent processes: (1) cognitive rebalancing, where dissonance between attitudes and media trust probabilistically reshapes preferences; (2) social influence, shaped by tie strength (close-peer effects), charisma and homophily (influencers), and reputational pressures such as fear of disapproval or social exclusion; and (3) structural constraints defined as the initial share of traditional and alternative media consumers, as well as a constant share of news avoiders. These mechanisms allow the model to distinguish between influence driven by normative conformity and influence driven by credibility and cognitive internalization. All simulation scenarios are accessible through an accompanying interactive Shiny application, which allows users to vary key parameters and directly observe how micro-level assumptions translate into emergent macro-level dynamics. Simulation experiments reveal that macro-level outcomes depend less on initial group sizes than on the configuration of normative pressure and credibility. When direct majority influence is present, reputational conformity and spiral-of-silence dynamics rapidly consolidate traditional media dominance, confining alternative media to small but resilient enclaves. Removing direct majority pressure produces stable coexistence, as numerical advantage alone proves insufficient to generate further consolidation. In contrast, high trust in alternative media enables a dispersed minority to exert strong indirect influence, triggering gradual but sustained growth that can ultimately reverse majority–minority hierarchies. Together, the findings demonstrate how decentralized interactions between cognitive mechanisms, social influence, and credibility structures generate emergent patterns of dominance, pluralism, or minority-driven realignment. The model contributes to media-effects theory by clarifying when alternative media remain marginal, when pluralistic equilibria persist, and when credibility-driven minority influence allows alternative outlets to scale into majority positions within fragmented information environments.

ARS13 Influence and Influencers in Digital Landscape

PP 0768 The influence of short video content in the sense making of societal challenges under conditions of epistemic uncertainty

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This paper explores how young people make sense of societal challenges through short-video content on algorithmically curated social media platforms in times of epistemic uncertainty. Short-video formats such as Instagram Reels, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts have become central sites of everyday meaning-making. Beyond entertainment, short videos function as sources of information about social and political issues, including social polarisation, economic insecurity, elections, migration, and war.

Building on qualitative empirical data, the paper examines how audiences engage with short-video content and how they perceive, interpret and integrate mediated information into their everyday sense-making of society. Rather than engaging with content in isolation, young people describe their media use as an ongoing interaction with what they refer to as “the algorithm.” The study shows that audiences give agency to algorithmic systems and perceive them as actors in their social media environments. Drawing on Actor-Network Theory, the paper conceptualises social media use as part of a socio-material collective in which human and non-human entities jointly participate in the mediated construction of reality.

A central analytical focus lies on processes of knowledge construction under conditions of epistemic uncertainty. In an information environment increasingly shaped by misinformation, emotionally charged content, and AI-generated material, young people face growing challenges in assessing the credibility and relevance of information encountered in short-video formats. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann’s sociology of knowledge, the study examines how new information is interpreted and integrated into existing stocks of knowledge.

Preliminary findings indicate that young people predominantly rely on plausibility-oriented sense-making strategies rather than validation-oriented sense-making strategies when engaging with short-video content. Credibility assessments are often based on the source and the content of information. In a social media environment, platform-specific indicators such as numbers of views, followers, and likes also play a significant role in young people’s plausibilisation strategies.

In addition, participants frequently draw on what Berger and Luckmann describe as common-sense knowledge. They evaluate information with the help of their "gut feeling," "common sense," or "logical thinking" to overcome the epistemic uncertainty they are in. Comment sections play a particularly significant role, as they provide socially shared interpretations and therefore serve as a collective frame for assessing the credibility of short-video content.

The empirical basis of the study consists of qualitative research conducted at a vocational school in Germany. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 students in July 2025. In addition, participant observation was employed to capture situated meaning-making processes: participants scrolled through their short-video feeds together with the researcher on their preferred platforms. The dataset currently comprises approximately 25 hours of audio recordings and 5 hours of video material.

Positioned within a constructivist and interpretive research paradigm, the project follows a Grounded Theory approach that emphasises the iterative interplay of data collection, analysis, and theory building. The paper contributes to audience and reception studies by offering a socio-material perspective on algorithmically mediated meaning-making and by empirically examining how audiences navigate epistemic uncertainty and negotiate knowledge in everyday encounters with short-video content.

ARS14 Engagement With Generative AI

PP 0874 Making sense of the imitation game: Communicative authority in student interactions with AI chatbots

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This paper presents the main lines of a research that reframes authority in Generative AI (GAI) communication by questioning the relevance of the concept of "epistemic authority" (Jäger, 2025) as grounded in relations of truth and knowledge, and instead introducing the notion of "communicative authority": the capacity of GAI chatbots to imitate convincing conversations that seem knowledgeable, supportive, and responsive.

GAI has entered everyday life most visibly through conversational interfaces such as *ChatGPT*, which promise help, personalization and immediacy. While debates have focused on accuracy, bias and the training of large language model, this research addresses a different question: how do non-expert users such as students assess the authority of GAI outputs as they lack the epistemic resources to verify these outputs?

The research hypothesizes that users come to accept GAI outputs as trustworthy based on the success of its "imitation game" (Turing, 1950). To explore this idea, I first draw on linguistic (Roman Jakobson's six functions of language, 1978) and discourse analysis (James Paul Gee's seven building tasks, 2025) to analyse how chatbots enact communicative authority through i.e. phatic friendliness, conative guidance, metalingual explanations, and stylistic mimicry of academic discourse. Such communicative design simulates expertise and fosters trust, even when epistemic warrant is opaque. Next, the research draws on Hall's Encoding/Decoding model (1980) and Schrøder's multidimensional model of sense-making (2000) to analyze how students decode this "imitation game", accepting, negotiating, or rejecting outputs based on perceived communicative adequacy.

Methodologically, the study combines discourse analysis of student-GAI chat protocols obtained through data donation with a reception study based on semi-structured interviews with university students and think-aloud sessions on those protocols. Specifically, I aim to examine how students accept outputs when communicative authority appears sufficient, negotiate outputs through additional prompting or repair strategies when it does not, and reject outputs when authority cues fail or conflict with their own positions or needs. The focus on students is motivated by their heavy use of GAI in learning contexts and by their novice status relative to epistemic expertise involved in learning contexts.

This research moves GAI scholarship toward an audience perspective, showing that authority in human-machine communication is a communicative achievement first, and only secondarily an epistemic one for many non-expert users. Reframing authority as communicative carries significant implications for literacy, democracy, and broader societal concerns. As epistemic and communicative authorities become conflated, the danger is an intensification of post-truth dynamics. Truth and knowledge may recede as priorities, while the emphasis shifts to making communication appear acceptable, personalized, and immediately relevant, underscoring the urgency of equipping users to critically interrogate not only what GAI says, but how it says it.

ARS14 Engagement With Generative AI

PP 0875 How audiences envision the societal impact of AI: A study of attitudes and imaginaries

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How do audiences envision the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on society, and what do they have in mind when making such considerations? To answer these questions, we analyse quantitative and qualitative data from a representative citizen survey panel in Norway, by applying a folk theory approach.

Currently, contradictory imaginaries of AI co-exist in academic scholarship and public debate, including dramatic and transformative scenarios. Our paper contributes to research on evolving sociotechnical imaginaries of AI, but instead of analysing narratives or public communication, we highlight ordinary citizens' considerations of emergent technologies, with a people-centred approach (Lomborg et al, 2023) and future-looking perspective (Hepp, 2025). As different applications of AI become prolific, it is difficult to know which concrete or imagined examples that inform attitudes. For audience scholars, it is essential to understand how different experiences with AI in mediated communication relate to societal imaginaries.

Our theoretical approach is folk theory analysis, building on former work on perceptions of algorithms (Ytre-Arne and Moe, 2021). Folk theories are intuitive causal theories people construct to explain the world (Gelman and Legare, 2011) and envision abstract and specific impacts. We draw on this framework in audience-focused analysis of AI, exploring how citizens relate to optimistic and pessimistic discourses, and which timescales and examples they refer to when envisioning the future impact of AI.

Methodologically, we analyse data from the Norwegian Citizen Panel, which regularly asks a representative sample of the Norwegian population to evaluate the direction society is taking, and assess the positive and negative impacts of different factors. In early 2025, approximately 60 percent responded that they found AI to have a somewhat positive, positive or very positive impact on society, indicating a high prevalence of techno-optimism. But what do such figures really mean? In late 2025, we repeated the question with an added prompt for open-ended replies, asking respondents to explain in their own words what they had in mind, including different consequences and short and long-term timescales.

Through this integration of qualitative data into a representative population survey, we contribute to a deeper understanding how audiences envision the role of AI in transformative media environments.

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ARS14 Engagement With Generative AI

PP 0876 Sailing uncharted AI waters: How early adopters navigate normative expectations around AI chatbots

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The arrival of the generative AI chatbot ChatGPT in 2022 confronted early adopters with a distinctive challenge of appropriation: expansive claims about the technology's civilization-shifting potential—voiced in celebratory and alarmist discourses—combined with a minimalist textbox interface. Not since Apple's 2009 claim that the iPhone offered "an app for just about anything" has such hyperbolic projection been paired with so limited design direction. While subsequent years brought new models, features, paid tiers, a mobile app, and a GPT Store, these developments offered little additional orientation regarding appropriate use. At the same time, accompanying discourses in mass media, educational institutions, professional contexts, and everyday interpersonal communication sent inconsistent descriptive and injunctive signals about the legitimacy of chatbot use.

This study examines how early adopters of ChatGPT navigated these conflicting and shifting normative expectations over the course of their appropriation in 2024 and 2025: where did users look for guidance, and which conditions of use and normative frames did they attend to or distance themselves from? How did these orientations evolve as both the technology and its surrounding discourses continued to change?

Empirically, we draw on two waves of hour-long semi-structured interviews conducted in 2024 and 2025 with 15 early adopters from Switzerland (7 female, 8 male; aged 20–26). Our participants were university students as typical early adopters of communication technologies, but the analysis extends beyond study-related practices to diverse everyday uses. We performed a thematic content analysis of the interview transcripts using the collaborative tool *Dedoose*. Initial coding categories were deduced from an established heuristic on the dynamic appropriation of smartphones (goals sought, attitudes, descriptive and injunctive norms, constraints, forms of metacommunication, and use of device features; Wirth et al., 2008), enhanced by Human–Machine Communication scholarship on relationships with AI and meaning-making. These categories were refined and extended inductively, with all transcripts double coded.

Our participants described their ongoing appropriation in reference to observations and discourses from interpersonal, institutional, and mediated contexts. We identified patterns in how users relied on these references, following the metaphorical conceptualization of norms as navigational tools (Morris et al., 2015).

- In the **autopilot mode**, users relied on perceived descriptive norms through largely unreflected practices that avoid normative risks.
- In the **radar mode**, users oriented themselves toward perceived injunctive norms, actively monitoring social expectations among different identity-relevant groups, and strategically signalling and adjusting their use across these contexts.
- In the **compass mode** (added in our inductive analysis), users guided their practices through internalized personal norms, such as ethical principles, relatively independent of situational social cues.

While many participants' trajectories showed a shift from radar-based navigation (wave 1) toward autopilot use (wave 2), our analysis also revealed countervailing trajectories and parallel reliance on multiple modes. These patterns differ from smartphone appropriation, where norm orientation had quickly stabilized into a dominant autopilot mode. Rather than stabilizing linearly, the three modes remained relevant as chatbot practices entered new normative contexts (e.g., through voice interactions). Our presentation maps these trajectories and their context-dependency to visualize the nonlinear dynamics of AI chatbot appropriation.

ARS14 Engagement With Generative AI

PP 0877 "It's a Swiss Army knife": A social-constructivist account of generative chatbots use

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Since the release of ChatGPT in November 2022, text-based generative LLM chatbots have become a part of people's everyday lives. However, the interactions of ordinary users with chatbots have received little attention in contemporary research, as the focus is primarily directed at specific user groups, such as students or customers. Furthermore, the vast majority of the scarce research on ordinary users employs psychological frameworks, whereas the social-constructivist perspective is largely absent. The resulting categorizations of chatbot usage and motivations for use lack the context of users' lived experiences, which is critical for a comprehensive understanding of chatbots' relevance for them. By employing the concept of use genres, which considers the act of technology use as a situated, typified, and meaningful action, this article provides a rich and detailed account of chatbot usage embedded in the everyday lives of ordinary users (N = 18) in the Czech Republic. The research conducted in 2025 utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data, which were subsequently analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The results indicate that several factors—including the nature of users' occupations, the (non)existence of routine and overall stability in their lives, the people around them, societal narratives about artificial intelligence, and user-technology relations—influence the actual usage of chatbots. Furthermore, the analysis enabled the articulation of six genres of chatbot use that were typical for participants included in the study. These comprise initial or long-term experimentation and the gradual identification of real-life applications, performing routine tasks connected to office jobs or education, getting help with tasks requiring specialized knowledge and skills the users did not have, acquiring fast and comprehensive advice anywhere and anytime, utilizing chatbots for brainstorming, planning, constructive feedback, and further minute assistance with their inputs, and having more-than-human conversations. Each of these categories encompasses diverse uses, motivations, actors, and objects, connected by typical situations in which users have found themselves. Consequently, this research provides a non-reductive insight into the usage of text-based generative LLM chatbots, centered on ordinary users and their everyday situated practices.

ARS14 Engagement With Generative AI

PP 0878 Adolescent's engagement with generative AI: A user typology

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Since the release of ChatGPT, we have experienced an increase of easy-to-use generative AI applications (GAI), which commonly offer a free version accessible for everyone. This leads to increasing use among children and adolescents (Stoilova et al., 2025; Zhang et al., 2025). The most popular GAI practices among this target group are asking questions, doing homework and searching for entertainment (Picton et al., 2025). Studies on young peoples' GAI use address a variety of topics, including children's development and well-being (Hashem et al., 2025), trust in GAI (Solyst, 2024), teenagers' emotional reactions to GAI (Vandenbosch & Schreurs, 2025), parental mediation of GAI use (Zhang et al., 2025, Yu, 2025), or the use of GAI in educational settings (Coblentz et al., 2025; Bao et al., 2025; Isodori et al., 2024).

Despite these diverse strands of research on young people's engagement with GAI, studies often focus on specific situations or single parts of the holistic ways in which young people interact and engage with GAI, and how they appropriate this technology in the context of their daily lives. Hence, our main research interest lies in the perspective of adolescents, aiming to identify the tasks for which GAI is used, as well as associated imaginaries of GAI including hopes, fears, and ideas of a future with GAI. Therefore, we conducted 42 interviews with Austrian adolescents aged between 13 and 17 years, as part of a broader international qualitative comparative study in 14 European countries. Participants were purposefully recruited on the principle of highest heterogeneity.

Within the Austrian sub-sample, which is in the focus of this contribution, we developed a typology of adolescent's engagement with generative AI, based on the following factors: knowledge, reflectivity of use, and variety of use. Self-confidence in dealing with GAI tools, and imaginaries of a future with GAI emerged as additional factors that helped explain and describe four types of adolescents' GAI engagement (experts, experienced users, pragmatic users, insecure users). Age, gender, formal education, and SES were not associated with the affiliation to these types. However, enabling parental mediation and co-using appeared to be relevant, as adolescents who experienced such media education at home, were more likely to be experts or experienced users.

ARS15 Seeking Information in AI Environements

PP 0979 The disclosure dilemma: How AI disclosure shapes advertising evaluations in social media contexts

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The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in advertising has intensified debates about transparency and the ethical implications of AI-generated content (AIGC). As platform-specific requirements and regulatory developments—such as the EU AI Act—increasingly mandate explicit labelling of AIGC, advertisers face growing pressure to disclose AI involvement.

Prior research suggests that such disclosure may negatively affect advertising effectiveness (Baek et al., 2024; Wortel et al., 2024). However, the psychological mechanisms underlying these effects remain insufficiently understood, particularly in the context of social media advertising (Koning & Voorveld, 2025).

Drawing on AI aversion literature, effort heuristic theory, and prior work on advertising creativity, this study investigates how different AI disclosure labels shape consumer attitudes toward advertisements, examining consumers' perceptions of the effort and creativity invested in the advertisements' production as underlying mechanisms.

A between-subjects online survey experiment (N = 316) was conducted in which each participant viewed an Instagram-style advertisement with one of three disclosure conditions: No label, AI-generated, or Human-AI Collaboration. Ad attitudes, perceived effort, and perceived creativity were measured using semantic differential scales. Mediation and serial mediation analyses were employed to test the hypothesized relationships.

The results reveal a clear AI disclosure penalty: advertisements labelled as involving AI were evaluated less favourably than unlabelled ads. Both perceived effort and perceived creativity significantly mediated the relationship between AI disclosure and ad attitudes. Moreover, the findings support a serial mediation pathway in which AI disclosure reduces perceived effort, which in turn lowers perceived creativity, ultimately leading to less favourable ad attitudes. Contrary to prior work, we find that labelling the ad as a Human-AI Collaboration did not mitigate the negative effects of AI involvement. Advertisements with the AI-generated and the Human-AI Collaboration labels did not differ significantly in terms of ad attitudes, perceived effort, or perceived creativity.

This study contributes to communication and advertising research in three ways. First, it extends AI disclosure research to the social media advertising context, where disclosure cues are often processed under low-attention conditions. Second, it identifies perceived effort and perceived creativity as robust, interrelated serial mechanisms shaping evaluations of AI-generated advertising content. Third, it contributes to emerging debates about the effectiveness of Human-AI Collaboration labels as an AI-aversion mitigation strategy, suggesting that minimal cues may be insufficient in low-attention digital environments.

Overall, the findings highlight a disclosure dilemma for advertisers, showing that transparency about AI involvement can undermine ad evaluations by lowering perceptions of effort and creativity.

ARS15 Seeking Information in AI Environements

PP 0980 Conversational AI vs. news media as sources of political information- An experimental study on the effects on trust, knowledge acquisition, and cognitive dissonance

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Conversational generative AI, such as ChatGPT, has become an increasingly embedded part of contemporary information-seeking, with significant relevance to social and political processes. With generative AI models continuously evolving and undergoing rapid technological advancements, the number of users approaching it for information-seeking purposes are rising. Generative AI is therefore transforming how citizens encounter, process, gain, evaluate and acquire information. While prior research has examined the accuracy of AI-generated information on news and political topics, its integration into journalistic practices, and general perceptions and levels of trust in AI- generated content (Simon et al., 2025), little is known on how conversational AI functions as an information source compared to online news media, and shapes political knowledge acquisition, trust formation and political education processes. Further, research on how various factors such as

the AI's output tone and style as well as user characteristics such as political leaning, prior interest, knowledge and attitude towards the topic, may play a role in this process is still scarce.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating how different characteristics of political information outputs and individual user characteristics shape political knowledge acquisition, trust, engagement, and attitudes. Focusing on the topic of transgender rights, as a current and highly contested and polarized political issue, the project examines how AI-based and journalistic political information is perceived and processed under varying conditions of source, tone, and response completeness. The study relies on the theoretical frameworks on trust and cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), allowing for an analysis of how engagement with AI-generated content on political news shapes informational trust, attitudinal alignment with the content, or creates dissonance.

An online survey with a between-subjects experimental design (N ≈ 1,200) among adult German online users with prior experience using AI tools will be conducted in March 2026. Participants will be randomly assigned to one of five experimental conditions that vary (1) information source (conversational AI vs. online news article), (2) tone (factual/formal vs. opinionated/less formal), and, specific to AI, (3) response completeness (informative response vs. refusal/non-response). The stimuli will consist of screenshots of AI-generated responses or journalistic articles presenting political information on transgender legislation.

In light of the current global political climate, marked by the rise of populism and right-wing ideologies alongside rapidly evolving conversational AI models, vulnerable to manipulations and misinformation, understanding how conversational AI shapes political information processing and knowledge gaining, trust, engagement, and the experience of cognitive consonance or dissonance in different contexts and scenarios (e.g., different tones, non-response/refusal) has become increasingly crucial.

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ARS15 Seeking Information in AI Environements

PP 0981 Coping with opinion-challenging information through communicative AI: A mixed-methods study of conversational information seeking with ChatGPT

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In online information environments, users may encounter opinion-challenging information (Steinfeld & Lev-on, 2024), which can evoke cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962). Prior research shows that when coping with such dissonance using traditional search engines, some users struggle during the orientation phase of information seeking, resulting in prolonged emotional discomfort (Wolff & Taddicken, 2024). Communicative artificial intelligence (ComAI), such as ChatGPT, may help overcome such challenges by offering a dialogical, personalized, and simplified mode of information search (Schäfer, 2023). However, it also raises concerns regarding confirmation bias, fueled by hypercustomization, reduced source visibility, or sycophantic responses (Lopez-Lopez et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, this study investigates how regular users of ComAI search for information on nuclear power after encountering opinion-challenging content. Specifically, it examines (RQ1) how users approach dissonant information when using ComAI, and (RQ2) whether and how ComAI users draw on a broader online information repertoire beyond ComAI.

This preregistered laboratory study conducted in July/August 2025 at a German university combined screen-captured information search tasks, post-exposure walkthrough interviews, and standardized surveys. Participants were 50 regular ComAI users from the general public (29 women; 26 with a university degree; age range 18–65, M = 30.62, SD = 11.85), who were initially skeptical toward nuclear power. During participation, they were exposed to a video proposing three arguments in favor of nuclear power. Participants subsequently searched for information using ChatGPT, with the option to consult other online sources. Walkthrough interviews followed key phases of the information search process (Kuhlthau, 1991), while pre-, mid-, and post-surveys assessed affective responses to the stimulus and information search, and attitudinal changes toward nuclear power.

First findings indicate that ComAI supports users in completing information searches perceived as satisfactory, with participants rarely restricting themselves to explicitly opinion-confirming content. Attitudes toward nuclear energy also became significantly more positive, yet still skeptical, after exposure and remained more favorable following information search. However, users tended to rely mostly on ChatGPT and consulted alternative online resources less frequently. After the information search, positive affect significantly exceeded negative affect, particularly feelings of confirmation, suggesting a reduction of cognitive dissonance.

Overall, while ComAI can help to reduce cognitive dissonance by facilitating manageable and satisfying information searches, users' strong reliance on a single conversational interface highlights the need to rethink information-seeking models, ComAI design, and information literacy under conditions of conversational information access.

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ARS15 Seeking Information in AI Environements

PP 0982 Chatting with biased bots: Impacts of gender stereotypes and counter-stereotypes in chatbot interactions

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While chatbots have become increasingly integrated into everyday life, increasing concerns are being raised regarding gender stereotypes in their outputs. For instance, studies employing the *Stereotype Content Model* (Fiske et al., 2002) show that the stereotype of women being warmer and less competent than men also shapes AI models (Schuster et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2023). Further, *Stereotype Priming* (Blair & Banaji, 1996) suggests that exposure to such stereotypes may impact individuals' self-perception, while *Stereotype Threat Theory* (Steele & Aronson, 1995) highlights potential implications for performance in stereotyped domains. Yet, newer AI models exhibit less gender bias (Chua et al., 2025) and may even risk overcompensating in their attempts to mitigate bias, creating counter-stereotypical outputs (Fulgu & Capraro, 2024). This study thus seeks to explore the possible impacts of gender stereotypes as well as counter-stereotypes on users' self-perception, self-evaluation, and performance.

Method

We conducted a laboratory experiment with female students ($N = 371$, $M_{age} = 25.89$) in Austria in December 2025. Participants were randomly assigned to interact with either a stereotypical, a counter-stereotypical, or a control chatbot for 7 minutes (for details, see online appendix: https://osf.io/2dsy6/files/osfstorage?view_only=b5f9edab6090417381d7b31c1a21cb57). Subsequently, we measured participants' warmth and competence self-perception (McCarty & Burt, 2024) as well as their self-evaluation regarding social sensitivity (Chen et al., 2018) and cognitive ability (Rammstedt & Rammsayer, 2003). We further utilized subsets of the *Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test* (Baron-Cohen et al., 2001) and the *International Cognitive Ability Resource* (Condon & Revelle, 2014) to assess performance in stereotyped domains. For exploratory purposes, we also measured participants' bias perception (Messingschlager & Appel, 2025), trust (Gulati et al., 2019), and usage intention (Wang et al., 2023) of the chatbot. The study was preregistered (https://osf.io/zqayj/overview?view_only=400a8a7e20c146a88d4f149c82242665) and IRB approved.

Key findings

The stereotypical chatbot was perceived as most focused on warmth, while the counter-stereotypical chatbot was seen as giving recommendations most centered around competence, indicating successful manipulation. We analyzed the data using structural equation modelling (see online appendix for details). The structural equation model ($CFI = 0.94$, $RMSEA = 0.04$) shows that participants who interacted with the counter-stereotypical chatbot self-evaluated their cognitive ability as significantly higher ($b = 0.29$, $p = .045$) compared to the control group. Yet, we found no significant differences between participants who interacted with the stereotypical or counter-stereotypical chatbot and the control group in terms of participants' self-perception, social sensitivity self-evaluation, and performance in stereotyped domains. An exploratory analysis using SEM ($CFI = 0.93$, $RMSEA = 0.07$) additionally shows that the stereotypical ($b = 0.62$, $p < .001$) and counter-stereotypical ($b = 0.35$, $p = .013$) chatbots were perceived as significantly more biased than the control chatbot. Further, participants' usage intention was significantly lower ($b = -0.34$, $p = .028$) for the counter-stereotypical chatbot compared to the control group.

Limitations and implications

Although our study has certain limitations, notably regarding the sample, it has relevant implications for both researchers and AI developers. Our findings indicate that the overcorrection of gender bias may have positive implications for self-evaluation, yet at the expense of reduced usage intention, underscoring the need for balance in AI development. Our results further suggest that longitudinal research may be required to assess potential long-term effects.

ARS15 Seeking Information in AI Environements

PP 0983 AI competence in practice: Divides in information-oriented engagement with generative AI

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Research on digital inequality has shifted from disparities in physical access to differences in audiences' skills, usage, and outcomes. The emerging AI divide can be understood as a continuation of these dynamics, with recent studies indicating that women, older adults, and individuals with lower levels of education are less likely to use generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT (Suárez & García-Mariñoso, 2025). At the same time, GenAI tools introduce new demands. Because they generate content through opaque processes and simulate communicative agency, meaningful engagement requires not only instrumental use but also the ability to critically assess machine-generated content – especially when using it for information purposes. Hence, this study places AI competence at its core and conceptualizes it as a multidimensional construct encompassing knowledge about AI, AI-related skills and usage practices, and attitudes toward AI (Carter et al., 2020; Wang et al. 2025).

Research on the AI divide has predominantly relied on self-reported measures of perceived AI competence (e.g., Wang et al., 2025), offering limited insight into how individuals actually engage with GenAI tools in practice. To address this limitation, the present study combines survey data with behavioral evidence from a real-time information-oriented interaction with a GenAI chatbot. Specifically, the study investigates (1) how socioeconomic and demographic factors are associated with differences in AI competence, (2) which population segments differ systematically in their configurations of AI competence, and (3) how these segments engage with a chatbot during an information-oriented task.

Empirically, the study draws on a preregistered online survey conducted in October 2025 with a quota-based sample of 1,500 adults representing the German population in terms of age, gender, and education. Besides established self-report measures of AI competence and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, respondents completed a task-based interaction with a GenAI chatbot embedded in the survey interface. The interaction involved acquiring information about either nuclear energy or young adults' social media use. Interaction logs captured how users engage with AI-generated content during the interaction. Results indicate that socioeconomic and demographic differences are reflected across the dimensions of AI competence. Latent profile analysis identifies distinct competence segments that differ not only in self-reported knowledge and attitudes, but also in how they interact with the chatbot during the task. Integrating self-reported and behavioral data, the study demonstrates how social inequalities translate into qualitatively different forms of everyday communicative engagement with generative AI, thus advancing our understanding of divides related to media use.

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ARS16 Young Audiences and News

PP 1080 How do young adults value and organize Generative AI in everyday life? A repertoire approach

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Communicative interactions between humans and genAI systems have rapidly become an everyday experience for large groups of people. Tools as ChatGPT are increasingly woven into ordinary practices including studying, information seeking, creative work, interpersonal communication and emotional self-support. Rather than appearing as discrete technological innovation, genAI is encountered through situated, repeated practices that are integrated into everyday routines. However, less is known about how users themselves make sense of these practices, how they differentiate between them, and how they evaluate what forms of AI use are meaningful, appropriate, or problematic in everyday contexts (Ofcom, 2025)). Accordingly, this paper employs a repertoire-approach (Brown 1993) and asks: How do young adults organize, prioritize, and value different genAI practices in everyday life?

Recent research on genAI increasingly foregrounds its role in everyday life, showing how AI practices are domesticated through mundane routines. Across empirical contexts, we see users actively interpret and negotiate their AI practices rather than simply adopting technologies as neutral tools (Ammari et al., 2025; Maeda & Quan-Haase, 2024, Depounti & Natale, 2025). This sense-making work involves ongoing negotiation of trust, responsibility, and legitimacy, as well as reflections on dependence, effort, and ethical boundaries (Shin et al., 2024). Additional research suggests that users' understandings of genAI often blur distinctions between instrumental use and relational engagement (Ammari et al., 2025). Together, these studies point to generative AI as a set of situated practices whose meaning and value are continuously negotiated in everyday life.

Extending these insights, this paper offers a repertoire-based perspective to capture how genAI practices are organized and made meaningful in everyday life. While existing studies document a wide range of AI-related activities, they often focus on individual practices in isolation. A repertoire approach instead examines how users combine, prioritize, and shift between different AI practices across situations, revealing how everyday uses are structured in relation to users' values, norms, and context.

Empirically, the paper draws on a mixed-method research design combining Q-sort methodology, think-aloud protocols, and semi-structured interviews with young adults. Participants are invited to sort a set of cards representing diverse generative AI practices, such as information seeking, academic assistance, creative exploration and emotional support using a forced-ranking grid. By requiring participants to prioritize certain everyday AI practices over others, the Q-sort elicits not only patterns of engagement but also participants' valuations of different forms of AI use (Brown, 1993). Combined with participants' verbal reflections during the sorting process, this approach captures how perceptions, priorities, and normative orientations toward generative AI practices are articulated through everyday sense-making.

This way, the paper contributes an audience-oriented account of how AI practices are made meaningful in daily life through constellations of practices shaped by values, norms, and situational constraints.

ARS16 Young Audiences and News

PP 1081 Now sense of place: A socio-technical approach to the transforming information practices of young adults

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This paper addresses contemporary audiences of news and digital information from a socio-technical perspective. News and information practices are transforming across the world, particularly among young audiences, and explaining factors that have been put forward are for example 1) the unwillingness to pay for news, 2) the massive amount of news and information flooding contemporary audiences, and 3) the negative character of news journalism. In this paper I take a different approach and depart from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities: Notes on the Spread and Origin of Nationalism* (1983), to analyse young audiences use and meaning making of news and other kinds of information. Anderson put forward four key aspects of early print culture that made nations and nationalism possible: 1) changes in the use and understanding of languages, 2) the transformation of the meaning of power and territories, 3) synchronisation of time, and 4) the spatial logic of print capitalism.

In relation to news and information they are essential as they also show in which cultural dimensions that technological change made *journalism* possible: *language*, *space* and *time*. Building on classic and contemporary media research (Meyrowitz 1986; Massey 1994; Bucher 2020; Lupinacci, 2022, Reynolds, 2025, etc.) I use these three categories to analyse 67 phenomenological interviews with young Swedish adults (18–26 years old). The analysis shows that 1) the young adults seamlessly use online news and information in Swedish, English (and sometimes other languages) to find information about the world they find relevant, 2) they construct relevance based on personalised spatialites, following their own and connected others' experiences of places, paralocal relationships to places, and a topics-based news interest, which guide what information about the world they find important to engage in, and 3) that they relate to a "personalised now" rather than a shared, or joint, now, making the newness of news relational and interest-based (rather than event-based). This is shown in everyday preferences and practices such as a personalised approach to the novelty of news, and tailored sharing and receiving of news, memes and information (to/from specific individuals and groups). This analysis explains, from a socio-technical perspective, young adults changing information practices, and contributes to our understanding of the struggles of contemporary news journalism.

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ARS16 Young Audiences and News

PP 1082 Institutional constraints and digital news: How young people in residential care make sense of information

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Access to credible news and information (N&I) plays a central role in young people's civic participation, and construction of worldviews. However, youths living in formal residential care are particularly exposed to intersecting social, digital, and institutional inequalities that shape their trust in information. Drawing on the concept of the "inequality loop" (Ragnedda et al., 2022), this presentation focuses on how this scarcely studied population engages with N&I as audiences.

This gap is partly explained by restricted access to residential care settings (Author1, Author3 & Author2, Year) that are often under-resourced and face heavy caseloads, limiting institutional capacity to support research needs (Author3 et al., Year; Author2 & Author1, Year).

Three research questions guide this presentation: how do young people in residential care access news? which sources do they rely on to stay informed about world events? and how do perceptions of credibility and emotional responses to news shape their engagement, avoidance, or selective reception of information? Results draw on data from a nationally representative online survey conducted in Portugal with young people aged 15–24 (N = 1,362; 95% confidence level; 2.7% margin of error), focusing on a subsample of youths living in residential care institutions. We aimed for a sample of 100 young people in residential care institutions but few granted permission for survey application. The final subsample includes 75 youths aged 15–24 (M = 18.13; SD = 2.208).

Findings show that media and news practices in residential care are strongly shaped by institutional routines and rules. Television remains a central source of N&I, particularly during mealtimes, while social media dominate access outside institutional settings with participants reporting low levels of trust in online news, reflecting broader young audiences trends (Newman et al., 2025).

N&I verification practices rely primarily on peers, especially older institutional friends underscoring the importance of proximity-based trust in contexts marked by limited informational resources and support. Emotional responses to news are predominantly negative, with news often perceived as sad, biased, or overwhelming, leading to selective exposure and disengagement. Content preferences focus mainly on sports, celebrities, and influencers, reflecting gendered patterns and experiences of displacement.

Considering that young people are the first generation to grow up in environments of N&I overload structured by algorithms and platform logics (Author2 et al., 2024), this study demonstrates how institutional regulation and mediated access shape news reception, credibility assessments, and emotional engagement. These dynamics ultimately constrain news literacy and reinforce digital and civic inequalities among youths in residential care, perpetuating the inequality loop (Ragnedda et al., 2022).

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ARS16 Young Audiences and News

PP 1083 Redefining news in everyday life: Generation Z audiences in the Italian media environment

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In contemporary hybrid and platformized media environments, the boundaries of what counts as news have become increasingly blurred. While much scholarship on Generation Z (often referred to as "Gen Z") has focused on patterns of news consumption—such as reliance on social media, selective exposure, and news avoidance—less is known about how young audiences themselves define and attribute meaning to news in everyday life. Yet, understanding these shifting perceptions is crucial, as they shape how information circulates, how journalistic authority is negotiated, and how democratic engagement is enacted in contemporary societies. Building on theories of media generations (Bolin, 2016; Hepp et al., 2017) and audience-centered approaches to journalism (Deuze & Witschge, 2020; Truyens & Picone, 2024), this paper argues that shifts in news perception—rather than consumption alone—are key to understanding Gen Z's evolving relationship with information. As digital natives who have grown up within a high-choice, algorithmically curated media environment, Gen Z audiences tend to encounter news embedded in social and visual flows rather than within clearly demarcated journalistic spaces. Previous research suggests that for younger audiences, the distinction between news, entertainment, and personal communication is increasingly fluid, with social networks and peer interactions playing a central role in determining

relevance and credibility (Edgerly & Vraga, 2019; Ray, 2023). These transformations challenge traditional, journalism-centered definitions of news and call for an audience-oriented reconceptualization of it (Peters, 2012; Swart et al., 2016).

The study focuses on the Italian context, where generational perspectives on news audiences remain comparatively underdeveloped despite profound transformations in the national media system. Adopting a qualitative, audience-centered methodology, the project combines digital news diaries with follow-up, in-depth interviews involving 30 Italian Gen Z participants selected through maximum variation sampling. Participants are asked to record over time everything they personally consider to be news, allowing the research to capture not only what content is encountered, but how news is subjectively recognized, categorized, and valued within their everyday routines. These diary entries are subsequently used as elicitation tools in interviews, enabling a reflexive exploration of the relationship between practices, discourses, and media infrastructures in Gen Z members' everyday life. By privileging Gen Z's lived experiences and interpretative frameworks, this paper contributes to audience studies debates on media meaning-making in conditions of platformization and mediatization of information. It argues that the urgency of studying Gen Z lies not merely in their changing consumption habits, but in their redefinition of news itself—an evolution with significant implications for trust, public knowledge, and democratic life. Understanding how young audiences make sense of news today is therefore essential for rethinking the role of journalism and public information in increasingly fragmented and personalized media environments.

ARS16 Young Audiences and News

PP 1084 'For you' and 'for us': How youth media practices challenge the post-mass media narrative

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The idea that communal media experiences no longer exist is gaining traction. Writing from a US context, Lotz (2025) argues that the last couple of decades have been characterised by audience fragmentation, to the extent that the notion of mass audience no longer captures the reality of how people watch screen stories. Relatedly regarding social media, some scholars understand contemporary online culture as having reached a 'post-viral' state, reflecting how we are segregated into ephemeral groupings (Hagen et al., 2025), or clustered into fragmented publics based on interests rather than social ties (Gerbaudo, 2024). Young people are especially interesting in this regard, since their media practices have been formed during years where streamers and social media were already commonplace (at least in the Global North).

Following a cross-media approach, this paper examines the mediated publics young audiences are part of, how abundance and choice affect the types of media content youth turn to, and if different generations live in separate media worlds. Why does certain content resonate, that is, what is it about these cultural encounters that instigate feelings of being moved and affected, perhaps disturbed and repelled, or 'simply' entertained?

Based upon an interview study with 24 Norwegian teenagers, aged 15–19, the analysis brings forth how fragmentation is but part of what characterises contemporary media publics. The first part of the analysis portrays what TV shows and films participants like to watch and indicates that intra-generational differences are almost as substantial as inter-generational differences. These fragmenting tendencies exist alongside how some nation-gathering shows still bring audiences (across generations) together. The second part of the analysis addresses the common practice of exploring the back catalogues of TV and music streaming platforms. What binds an interest in old TV shows and old music is not a backward gaze but a platform-enabled horizontality of time, where the near-past is part of the shelf. The cultural consequence is twofold: adolescence is lived in temporally distributed publics, and taste formation stretches across generations. The final part of the analysis illustrates how social media facilitate flexible and layered publics. On the one hand, the 'For-you'-logic enables youth to assemble an 'inner circle' that mirrors their evolving self-concept. One the other hand, and somewhat contrary to Gerbaudo's thesis of clustered publics, the same recommender systems also surface peer-driven signals that keep users tethered to broader intersecting publics.

Ultimately, the paper argues that while 'mass audience' may have transformed, contemporary media life is defined not by total fragmentation, but by an interplay of algorithmic niches and shared cultural anchors.

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CYM01 Methodologies for Youth Participation

PP 0071 Development and validation of the Digital Agency Scale for Adolescents (DASA)

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Adolescents' social media use is increasingly shaped by engagement-prolonging designs (EPDs) such as infinite scroll, autoplay, and algorithmically curated feeds. While social media can support connection and self-expression, these design features are deliberately engineered to maximise attention and time spent on these platforms, contributing to patterns of overuse that can interfere with sleep, schoolwork, and offline relationships. Importantly, emerging evidence suggests that negative outcomes are not necessarily driven by time spent on social media, but by how adolescents experience and (un)successfully regulate their use. This has led to growing interest in *digital agency*—the capacity to intentionally manage social media use in ways that align with one's goals and wellbeing. However, despite increasing theoretical attention, there is no agreed-upon conceptualisation or validated measure of digital agency that is tailored to adolescents navigating EPD-driven platforms.

The present study addresses this gap by developing and validating the *Digital Agency Scale for Adolescents (DASA)***.** Building on Passey et al.'s (2018) multidimensional framework and integrating recent work on agentic social media use, we conceptualise digital agency as consisting of three subdimensions: *Digital Confidence* (belief in one's ability to exert control over social media use), *Digital Competence* (knowing how to use platform settings to mitigate overuse), and *Digital Accountability* (willingness to prioritise control over social media use at the cost of short-term gratifications).

Scale development followed best practices and involved multiple phases. An initial pool of 27 items was generated through theory-driven deduction and expert review, then refined through cognitive interviews with nine adolescents aged 12–18. The scale was subsequently administered in a two-wave survey study with UK adolescents (Wave 1 $N = 543$; Wave 2 $N = 290$). Exploratory factor analysis supported a three-factor structure, and item reduction resulted in a parsimonious 12-item scale (four items per subscale). Confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated excellent model fit and showed that the three-factor model substantially outperformed one- and two-factor alternatives.

The final DASA demonstrated good internal consistency across each subscale and sufficient test–retest reliability. Validity analyses revealed that Digital Confidence and Digital Competence were related to lower levels of negative outcomes and higher levels of positive outcomes, whereas Digital Accountability was only associated with negative outcomes. Yet, Digital Accountability showed the strongest associations with taking actions to regulate one's social media use, suggesting that adolescents who experience the negative effects of social media are the most motivated to alter platform settings to regain control. Together, these findings highlight digital agency as a multidimensional construct with theoretically meaningful and practically relevant distinctions. The DASA provides a validated tool for advancing research on adolescents' social media use and for informing interventions aimed at fostering healthier, more intentional engagement with EPD-driven platforms, whilst also helping us to further understand the complex relationship adolescents have with social media.

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CYM01 Methodologies for Youth Participation

PP 0072 How participatory research shapes adolescents' sense-making of data-driven technologies

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This paper examines how Belgian adolescents (14–17 years old) make meaning of data-driven technologies and how these meanings shape their actions or inactions. In addition, we focus on questions and concerns that accompany adolescents' everyday engagements with such technologies, including Generative AI and AI chatbots, algorithmically steered platforms, and personalised recommender systems. While data and AI increasingly shape adolescents' everyday lives, decisions about data-driven platforms are often made without consulting them, and current curricula barely mention data-related competences. Strengthening young people's data and AI competences is essential for safe participation in a datafied society, with scholars stressing the importance of participatory and creative approaches to data education (Werning, 2020; Bhargava et al., 2022).

Therefore, the goal of this study is twofold. Firstly, we explore how adolescents (14–17 years old) in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium experience their daily interactions with data-driven technologies. Secondly, we look at how engagement with participatory research influences their sense-making of these technologies. We therefore base our research on the following questions:

1. A) How do adolescents (14–17) understand and experience the presence of data-driven technologies in their daily lives?

2. B) How does engagement in participatory research activities influence adolescents' (14–17) sense-making of data-driven technologies?

We apply a multi-stage participatory approach, conducting individual semi-structured interviews with each participant focused on their current user practices of data-driven technologies. This is followed by two rounds of interactive focus groups with all participants (N = 60), exploring their questions, challenges, and needs. Each focus group will consist of 10 participants. During the first round of focus groups, we zoom in on participants' contextual knowledge and experiences with data and AI. The second round builds on the first by examining how participatory and interactive research formats contribute to shared understandings of everyday data practices. For both methods, we use creative and projective techniques (i.e., visual tools and cards, vignettes, and scenarios) to allow us to discuss complex and abstract issues of data-driven technology in adolescents' lives (Gauntlett, 2007; Rainford, 2019).

All data collection will be finalised by May 2026. During the conference, we will be able to give an overview of all results, from both the interviews and the focus groups. Preliminary analysis focuses on identifying recurring themes in adolescents' lives and explores how participatory formats shape collective reflection on data and AI practices. Building on these results, the study contributes empirical insights into adolescents' experiences with data-driven technologies, while also offering methodological reflections on participatory research as a space for youth sense-making. By foregrounding adolescents' voices, this study will give us insights for policymakers, educators, and community organisations to help young people better understand their digital and data environments.

CYM01 Methodologies for Youth Participation

PP 0073 How can we evaluate media literacy interventions with children (10–12 years old)? Methodological insights from a school-based mixed method study

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Media and digital technologies play an increasingly important role in many areas of our daily lives (Ytre-Arne, 2023), making the ability to critically, consciously and constructively engage with these technologies an essential skill. Over the years, a growing number of interventions, tools and educational programs have been developed to strengthen individuals' media literacy skills. However, assessing the effectiveness of media literacy interventions remains a complex task (Donoso et al., 2021), especially when such interventions target children. Drawing on the evaluation of a school-based media literacy program, this paper explores how different approaches can meaningfully capture children's experiences with media literacy interventions.

Between May and June 2025, an evaluation was conducted of '*De Schaal van M*', which is a school-based media literacy program developed by the Flemish Knowledge Centre for Digital and Media Literacy (Mediawijs). The program targets children in the last two years of primary education (10–12 years old) in Flanders and Brussels. Over a two-week period, teachers and pupils engage with a variety of media literacy topics using the program's educational materials. At the end, classes can also participate in a competition to be recognized as the "most media literate class of Flanders".

The evaluation took place in 10 schools across Flanders and Brussels. Three complementary data collection methods were used: a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and a creative drawing task. The questionnaire assessed children's knowledge of the topics addressed during the program, while the interviews explored their experiences and reflections. The drawing task invited children to visually represent their associations with the program, oTering access to aspects of their experiences that may be diTicult to articulate verbally.

This paper adopts a reflective, methodological perspective. The evaluation of '*De Schaal van M*' is used as a case to explore the suitability, feasibility and limitations of diTerent methods for assessing media literacy interventions with children. The following research questions will be addressed:

1. How do different data collection methods (a questionnaire, interview and drawings) provide insights into children's experiences with a school-based media literacy program?
2. What methodological challenges and opportunities arise when using these methods to evaluate a media literacy program in a school-based context?
3. What is the added value of a creative method, such as drawings, in capturing children's experiences during the evaluation process?

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CYM01 Methodologies for Youth Participation

PP 0074 Creative Engagement and Knowledge Co-production: Arts-Based Approaches with Young People from Vulnerable Communities

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Conducting research with intergenerational vulnerable communities presents significant methodological and ethical challenges. Power dynamics, language barriers, and the marginalisation of specific age groups – particularly children and older adults – complicate efforts to grasp authentic voices and experiences (Doucet et al., 2021; Huard et al., 2024). Vulnerability emerges as a multidimensional, intersectional condition shaped by economic, social, environmental, and political factors converging across identity traits such as race, gender, class, age, and immigration status (Adger, 2006; Turner et al., 2003). Within vulnerable communities, individuals face deprivation, marginalisation, and potential exclusion that constrain their participation, access to resources, and community recognition (Taket et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2023). When vulnerability intersects with intergenerational dynamics, research complexity intensifies, as not all age groups possess equal capacity for verbal expression, and traumatic experiences often resist conventional linguistic communication (Coemans et al., 2015). Arts-based methods – encompassing visual arts, drama, music, photography, drawing, and performance – provide innovative pathways for engaging participants, exploring sensitive topics, and bridging linguistic and generational divides (Bagnoli, 2009; MacDonald & McMahon, 2017). These approaches position art not as an end product but as a medium within research processes that enables nonverbal expression, fosters creative communication techniques, and reduces power asymmetries between researchers and participants (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Lo & Wiseman, 2023). By facilitating knowledge co-creation, arts-based methods transform marginalised populations from research subjects into active knowledge producers, disrupting exclusionary dynamics perpetuated by traditional research frameworks (O'Neill et al., 2017; Strand et al., 2022).Building on this theoretical foundation, this paper discusses the practical application of arts-based methods within the STORYline project. This exploratory participatory action research project combines community-based research with ethnographic characteristics, aiming to deepen knowledge about intergenerational and youth citizenship. The research seeks to answer three central questions: 1) How do intergenerational relationships shape young people's experiences and perceptions of citizenship? 2) What influence do adult figures—particularly those present in non-formal educational contexts—have on young people's perspectives on citizenship? 3) What impact do digital media have on the construction of citizenship narratives? Through preliminary focus groups (conducted in November 2025) and arts-based workshops (to be held in February-March 2026) with participants aged 18 to 29, the project creates spaces to explore lived experiences and citizenship perspectives. Based on the experiences of these two phases of empirical work, this paper aims to explore the results as well as the empirical dimension that demonstrates that arts-based methodologies, when implemented with ethical reflexivity, represent transformative practices that value participant agency, facilitate authentic expression across age groups, and contribute to healing alongside knowledge production (Huard et al., 2024; Paterson-Young et al., 2025), while fostering possibilities for community action and social change (Purcell, 2009; Thiele & Marsden, 2003).

CYM01 Methodologies for Youth Participation

PP 0075 Reflective approaches to video game diversity: Engaging children in science communication

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This paper examines how research on character diversity in video games can be communicated to children through workshops that combine pedagogical innovation, participatory approaches, and reflective research practice. Science communication has been drawn an increasing attention, yet it has mainly focused on adult audiences outside academia (Buslón et al., 2020; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2023). As a result, children remain overlooked as legitimate stakeholders. This study recognises children as active citizens and participants in science communication. It positions them not only not as recipients of knowledge but as co-creators who can reflect critically on research and contribute insights that inform both practice and future scholarship.

In the context of video games, children are considered as current and future gamers, potential developers, industry actors, and parents in this study. Workshops were designed to communicate empirical findings on character representation and diversity into formats that are accessible, engaging, and actionable for children, enabling them to critically reflect on their experiences and perceptions of video games. This participatory approach challenges traditional deficit-oriented models of science communication, treating children not as passive recipients but as active contributors capable of co-creating knowledge (Bucchi & Trench, 2016). During the workshops, children engaged in discussions of representation, diversity, and equity in video games. The workshops encouraged critical thinking, ethical reflection, and awareness of broader social issues.

The study adopts a collective self-study methodology to promote reflexivity among researchers and support continuous pedagogical improvement. By reflecting on workshop design, implementation, and children's feedback, the research team

identified strategies to foster inclusive participation and enhance the effectiveness of science communication initiatives. Our findings demonstrate that children's engagement with research on character diversity in video games goes beyond understanding content. Children can be involved in co-producing knowledge, reflecting on personal experiences, and questioning social and cultural narratives about video games.

Moreover, by employing a collective self-study approach, the team evaluated their pedagogical decisions, refined their methods for communicating research to children, and adopted more inclusive and responsive practices. Based on findings from the workshops and self-study reflections, the study argues that children can participate in science communication as active citizens. It also demonstrates that science communication can be both participatory and ethically informed, effectively bridging research and everyday experiences.

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CYM03 Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

PP 0181 Adolescents' self-diagnosis of mental illness in algorithmic social media environments: A cross-sectional study on predictors and protective factors

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The increasing discourse around mental illnesses (MI) on social media shapes adolescents' perceptions in different ways: while MI content can increase awareness and support disorder recognition, algorithmic amplification of MI content may also foster biased interpretations. According to the *Prevalence Inflation Hypothesis*, frequent exposure to MI content can lead individuals to overestimate the prevalence of MI. As a result, they might interpret normal emotional experiences as pathological and engage in self-diagnosis (SD). Although SD can reflect accurate self-assessment, it entails risks when based on misinterpretation or lacking professional validation.

Research on SD in social media contexts has mostly relied on qualitative approaches, focusing on narratives, motivations, and attitudes toward SD. Quantitative evidence on the mechanisms linking exposure to MI content and SD, as well as on factors that may mitigate these effects, is scarce. Algorithm literacy (AL), including awareness of and knowledge about algorithmic mechanisms, may serve as a protective factor. As it has been associated with more critical media reception, AL may reduce unreflective internalization of MI information.

Guided by the *Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model* (DSMM), this study understands media effects as the result of dynamic interactions between individual (susceptibility) factors and media use. In our case, this means that adolescents' traits (e.g., developmental stage, prior knowledge) interact with their exposure to MI content to shape outcomes such as SD intentions. Applying this framework allows us to examine not only whether exposure to MI content affects SD, but also how both individual differences and media mechanisms influence the process. We focus on adolescents because they are not only highly active social media users but also in a critical phase of identity formation, increasing their susceptibility to media influences.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the associations between exposure to MI social media content and adolescents' SD intentions. We hypothesize that both incidental (H1a) and intentional exposure to MI content (H1b) are positively associated with SD intentions. Furthermore, we test whether these associations are mediated by an increased perceived MI prevalence (H2a,b) and by greater knowledge about MI (H3a,b). Finally, we examine if algorithmic awareness (H4) and algorithmic knowledge (H5) weaken the relationship between MI content exposure and SD intentions, acting as protective factors.

Analyses are based on cross-sectional data from the first wave of a three-wave longitudinal survey including approximately 1,500 adolescents aged 12–19 years from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Measures include exposure to MI content, SD intentions, perceived prevalence of MI, MI knowledge, and algorithm literacy. Using structural equation modeling, we will assess direct, indirect, and moderating effects. In exploratory analyses, we consider demographic and psychosocial covariates, representing individual susceptibility factors within the DSMM framework.

As T1 data collection has just concluded, findings will be presented at the conference and will offer novel quantitative insights into how algorithmic environments shape adolescents' interpretations of MI content. Examining underlying

mechanisms associated with SD, our results contribute to a deeper theoretical understanding of SD and offer practical implications for media literacy and mental health education.

CYM03 Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

PP 0182 Is later really better? An exploratory study on the conditional effects of smartphone adoption age on digital engagement and mental health in late adolescence

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What is the appropriate timing for an adolescent to get his or her own smartphone? This question has become important in the current era, where connectivity has become almost inevitable. Previous studies have largely been grounded in the assumption that mobile media is detrimental, leading to recommendations that parents postpone children's smartphone adoption. However, recent studies found that people can perceive the positive effects of mobile media, and when the positive effects they perceive in the cognitive, emotional, and social domains outweigh the negative effects, they perceive a sense of digital well-being. Therefore, this exploratory study advocates a shift in focus from mitigating the negative effects of mobile media to fostering the positive outcomes of digital connection, examines the symbolic (a marker of "grown up") and instrumental (a social tool) values of the smartphone for adolescents, and seeks to identify family- and individual-level boundary conditions under which earlier smartphone adoption yields more positive outcomes for Chinese adolescents.

The data of this study come from the 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022 Chinese Family Panel Studies. Participants aged 6–9 years old in 2010 and who completed all measurements for the key variables in all four waves of the study were selected as the sample for this study ($N_{Model\ 1}$ = 306, 49.7% girls; $N_{Model\ 2}$ = 336, 49.1% girls). Two multiple linear regression models were estimated, examining the symbolic (Model 1) and instrumental (Model 2) value of the smartphone, respectively. Model 1 showed that among children with higher self-esteem (+1 SD) and whose parents focus more on education (+1 SD), an earlier age of smartphone adoption was linked to a lower score of depression in late adolescence, b = -0.98, p = .003. Meanwhile, Model 2 showed that among girls whose family social connectedness was weak (-1SD), an earlier age of smartphone adoption during adolescence was linked to more time online in late adolescence, b = 32.58, p = .03. However, among girls whose family social connectedness was strong (+1SD) in pre-adolescence, an earlier age of smartphone adoption during adolescence was linked to less time online in late adolescence, b =-27.56, p = .09.

The results of this study revealed that earlier smartphone adoption was linked to lower depression in children with higher self-esteem and whose parents focus more on education (representing a "*guan*" culture of Chinese education), which could be because receiving a smartphone as *a symbol of "growing up"* could serve as a source of accomplishment during their high-pressure adolescence. In addition, the age of smartphone adoption had different effects on girls' online time, depending on their families' social connectedness. This could be because (compared with boys) girls place a greater emphasis on social interactions during adolescence; those whose families have a weak social connectedness (indicating a lower social interaction supply) more treated smartphones as *a social tool* for compensation. More detailed survey and interview studies should be conducted to further reveal the mechanisms behind the current exploratory results.

CYM03 Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

PP 0183 Parental mediation of media use: Effects of restrictiveness of rules on teens' social media practices and well-being/mental health

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In today's platformed media environments, adolescents' media use is shaped by both technological affordances and family mediation strategies. This contribution examines how parental mediation of media use, defined here by either the presence or absence of rules or by the total number of restrictive rules, influences two key dimensions: (1) digital practices on social media and (2) adolescent well-being. We draw on two communication frameworks: Uses & Gratifications Theory (U&G), which explains the motivations behind media choices, and the Parental Mediation Model (PMM), which addresses how rules structure media uses.

In line with recent refinements of the PMM, we adopt a broad understanding of restrictive rules, encompassing not only time or content-based limits, but also contextual restrictions that structure when and how media can be used, such as banning media use during meals or prohibiting screen use until homework is completed (Shin & Kang, 2016).

Social media practices are grouped into two categories: active use, including social interaction (messaging, commenting, sharing) and content production (posting, live streaming), and passive use (browsing, scrolling), following a commonly employed distinction (Lin et al., 2016). Building on a U&G and PMM perspectives, this study thus asks whether adolescents

under different parental rule constraints tend to privilege active practices or consumption-oriented behaviors, and how these distinct patterns of use are associated with their well-being and mental health.

Using longitudinal survey data from the MICAH study (N ≈ 800 adolescents, three semi-annual waves), we explore associations between parental mediation profiles (more or less restrictive rule-setting vs. no rules), reported social media behaviors (active/passive), indicators of well-being (WHO-5), and mental health measures (depression, anxiety).

Preliminary findings suggest that adolescents with a higher number of restrictive family rules report lower overall screen time and lower frequency of media checking behavior, as well as more active and socially oriented uses of social media. This suggests that adolescents under tighter constraints appear to concentrate their limited time on intentional and socially gratifying activities, while reducing passive scrolling. Interestingly, teens under more restrictive rules also showed lower levels of depressive symptoms both concurrently and over time. The possible moderating influence of additional factors (gender, FOMO, motivations) will be also explored.

These findings support the idea that restrictive parental mediation of media use can be seen as a form of communication regulation, shaping not only how much time adolescents spend online but why and how they use it, with significant consequences for their psychological health.

CYM03 Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

PP 0184 "I didn't ask for it, I didn't want it, and I wasn't asked if I wanted it": How young people experience and cope with unwanted sexual communication on the internet

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Since almost all online platforms provide the opportunity to get in touch with others, young people are facing various online contact risks (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). One of them is unwanted sexual communication (Barbovschi et al., 2021). Specifically, this includes receiving unwanted sexual pictures, sexualized and misogynistic messages, requests for sexual information, and cybergrooming. Despite relatively high prevalences (Smahel et al., 2020; MPFS, 2025), there is a lack of in-depth data on how adolescents experience such situations and how they cope with them.

To shed light on young people's perceptions of and coping with online contact risks, we conducted 16 semi-structured interviews with 12- to 17-year-olds (7 girls and 9 boys) in Germany between July and September 2022.

The interviews illustrate the multifaceted nature of unwanted sexual communication online, encompassing unsolicited sexual images and messages from strangers, peers, or bots on different platforms, as well as cybergrooming. Reported stress responses ranged from feelings of annoyance, irritation, and confusion to more intense negative emotions such as shock, disgust, anger, or fear. Adolescents who experienced these encounters as more stressful emphasized their involuntary and non-consensual nature, describing them as direct invasions of privacy: "I didn't ask for it, I didn't want it, and I wasn't asked if I wanted it" (girl, 14 years). In contrast, adolescents explained less intense—or no—stress reactions by referring to habituation and a sense of confidence in knowing how to handle such situations: "You kind of get used to it. You just block them, or delete it, or whatever, and don't think about it any further" (girl, 16 years). Interestingly, adolescents who experienced cybergrooming reported initially positive feelings linked to attention and compliments, which shifted to negative emotions as the encounter progressed.

Regarding coping, the results point to a minimum standard coping repertoire, which includes technical strategies such as blocking, reporting, and deleting, or ignoring the contact. Depending on the extent of stress responses, negative affect and potential negative consequences, this repertoire is enhanced by using cognitive (e.g., repression, distancing, humor) or emotion regulation (e.g., going for a walk, listening to music) strategies, and seeking social or institutional support. While participants usually perceive technical strategies and support seeking as effective ways of coping, they find defense mechanisms such as avoidance and repression, as well as humor rather ineffective. In cases of cybergrooming, effective coping seems to be complicated or counteracted by the perpetrator's efforts to establish a relationship.

Overall, our findings point to an increased need for practitioners to strengthen young people in their right to sexual self-determination, self-esteem, and digital self-assertiveness, and help them balance conflicting opportunities and risks (so-called risky opportunities, Haddon & Livingstone, 2017). Further research is needed on the long-term impact of (repeated) cyberharassment and the effectiveness of coping strategies. As we observed that some adolescents had difficulty describing and evaluating the situation retrospectively or expressing their feelings, future studies should seek to address these challenges with more innovative research designs and tools (e.g., diary studies or in situ research).

CYM03 Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing

PP 1050 A Tale of Two Adolescences: Problematising the epistemological orbit of Adolescence on Netflix

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In March of 2025, the popular streaming service Netflix released a limited television series produced in England titled *Adolescence*. The four-episode series follows the story of thirteen-year-old boy Jamie who murders his female classmate Katie, tracking the impact of the murder and subsequent arrest across Jamie's family and community. Critical reception of the series was positive, but more notable was the international "frenzy of debate" following its release (Ging and Baker, 2025, p. 2), much of which was centred on the show's portrayal of internet media and their negative influence on teenagers (see, among many others, Jones, 2025; Kohatsu, 2025; Wex, 2025; Williams, 2025). In Norway, for example, *Adolescence* became a catalyst for reporting concerning online extremism and the experiences of young Norwegians with the internet (Aasmundsen, 2025; Heggen, 2025). The reception of the series also had concrete political effects: following its release governments in the UK, France, and Ireland implemented screenings of the series as part of the secondary curriculum (Hui, 2025; Le Monde with AFP, 2025; O'Brien, 2025), and some researchers link *Adolescence* to the "push for blanket social media bans for children" (Ging and Baker, 2025, p. 5) in various countries (Reuters, 2025). In his recent New Year address, Norwegian Prime Minister referenced *Adolescence* directly as an example of how "young people live in digital spaces that we adults do not always see," (Støre, 2026).

How is it that a fictional television series has been met in the public discourse as documentary evidence? And do the journalistic and political reactions to *Adolescence* reflect the reality of adolescents online? We suggest that the 2025 Netflix series *Adolescence* was produced and received in a distinct *epistemological orbit*: a cultural sphere where persistent assumptions concerning teenagers and internet technologies inform and ultimately construct what comes to count as knowledge on adolescence in the digital age.

We begin with a brief analysis of the production of *Adolescence*, building on previous research to show how its representations of contemporary life are constituted in/constitutive of popular and problematic narratives concerning youth, adulthood, gender, and most importantly internet media. This is what we term the *epistemological orbit* into which the series has emerged: where narratives inform key assumptions that go on to establish what is perceived as *universal knowledge* concerning young people and the internet, and where a fictional television show created by adults to be viewed by adults can be received as documentary evidence of the 'actual experience' of adolescents. Then, using qualitative data from a series of creative TikTok workshops with teenagers aged 16–17 in Oslo in 2024 and quantitative data which was collected via a survey of 9- to 15-year-olds across Norway in 2025, we directly compare the representations of youth and media presented by *Adolescence* with the perspectives and experience of adolescents in context. In doing so we problematise the assumptions that underwrite the epistemological orbit of the series as being adult-centric and reflective of a powerfully affective paradigm of fear, rather than the empirical reality of teenagers using the internet.

CYM04 Navigating AI in the Daily Lives of Children and Young People

PP 0147 What can I help you with? Young people's experiences and perceptions of artificial sociality

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GenAI tools-including both AI companions and LLMs chatbots-are designed to enter in a communicative relationship with their users and mimic an emotionally responsive dialogue. Indeed, the ability to mimic credible emotional responses is constitutive of the success of chatbots. The resulting experience has been defined as "artificial sociality" (Natale & Depounti, 2025) to emphasise its simulated character. The feelings artificial sociality generates, however, are experienced as authentic by users, and this explains why children and young people are increasingly turning to Gen AI not just as a search engine-to seek information and advice on a range of topics, including practical and issues, as well as more sensitive topics relating to health and sexuality- but also as a source of companionship and emotional support. Perceived as always accessible and non-judgemental, chatbots and AI companions provide young people with a seemingly safe and private space to perform emotional work (Vecchione, 2025). This leads to an emergent form of sociality "in which individuals form relational dependencies not just with networks of people but also with socially responsive AI agents that offer companionship and support" (Brandtzaeg et al., 2025, p. 3), that they call "AI individualism". In their work, they highlight the enabling as well as constraining character of AI individualism, which, as networked individualism before, is susceptible to lead to both empowerment and disempowerment. In fact, while AI individualism may enhance autonomy, personalisation and control in the maintenance and management of interpersonal relationships, it equally intensifies users' dependence on "data relations" (Couldry & Mejias, 2019), reconfiguring the very conditions of sociality around platforms' business logic

and data greed. Potential benefits of artificial sociality include loneliness alleviation and emotional support, whereas risks encompass increased anxiety and loneliness, emotional manipulation and mis- or disinformation, affecting children's rights to access quality information, wellbeing, development and agency. Based on a comparative analysis of 63 interviews with 13–17-year-olds from Italy, Norway, Serbia and the UK, we examine their experiences with chatbots as "friends", "advisers" or "romantic partners" and show how artificial sociality depends on human projections of social meanings and feelings, including joy, happiness, excitement and surprise. Anthropomorphisation, triggered by chatbots' ability to mimic a personal and emotional relationship, is also a meaning-making practice through which children and young people try to make sense of GenAI's functioning and compensate for their lack of AI literacies. In fact, interviewees engage in emotional conversations and trustful relationships with chatbots when they believe in their human-like nature and express positive feelings around engagement with GenAI. Conversely, those who consider chatbots to be more machine-like do not attribute particular feelings to artificial sociality. Rather, they question the credibility of GenAI's outputs and resist its manipulative language by refusing politeness and giving orders. These findings contribute to the understanding of artificial sociality and help outline both AI literacy interventions to minimise its risks and children's rights-respectful design principles.

CYM04 Navigating AI in the Daily Lives of Children and Young People

PP 0148 Human or AI? Young people's analytical and intuitive processes in evaluating AI-generated information

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AI-generated content is becoming increasingly common on social media, which is a primary source of information for young people, making them particularly likely to encounter such content. Research on AI-generated information has primarily focused on people's ability to recognize AI-generated content and on the perceived credibility of this content (e.g. Waddell, 2018; Frank et al., 2024; Jia et al., 2024). Less attention has been paid to the processes that shape these evaluations. This study examines how intuitive and analytical thinking influence how young people evaluate AI-generated content. It is grounded in dual-process theory, which posits that judgment formation is influenced by these two distinct cognitive systems (Tversky & Kahneman, 2002). Intuitive thinking is characterized by rapid, unconscious responses shaped by prior experiences, while analytical thinking involves a deliberate, slower process that relies on reasoning and explicit knowledge (Tversky & Kahneman, 2002; Glöckner, 2009). Although some research shows that higher analytical thinking ability is associated with better detection of AI-generated content (Pehlivanoglu et al., 2021; Frank et al., 2024), it remains unclear how analytical and intuitive processes shape these evaluations.

Employing a mixed-method design, an evaluation task is combined with follow-up qualitative interviews to capture both reaction times and self-reported accounts of evaluation formation. Participants include childhood (8–12 years), adolescence (13–17 years), and emerging adulthood (18–25 years). These ages are particularly relevant, as youths news consumption is largely social-media based, often passive and incidental, and shaped by heuristics and intuitive judgments rather than deliberate fact-checking (Swart & Broersma, 2022; Tamboer et al., 2022). Participants view AI- and human-generated content presented in the style of Instagram and TikTok platforms in a game-like setting and evaluate whether the content is AI-generated via a button-press. The stimuli in the game cover a range of topics and are modeled closely on material circulating online.

The quantitative analyses give insight into decision times as a behavioral indicator of intuitive versus analytical processing, with faster responses reflecting intuitive thinking (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Glöckner, 2009; Betsch & Glöckner, 2010). Regression-based models and descriptive statistics are used to examine speed–accuracy trade-offs, detection accuracy, and the impact of demographic factors on the evaluation process. Following the button-press task, qualitative interviews explore participants' reasoning, motivations, and strategies. Qualitative coding of the interview data reveals whether reaction time is correlated with intuitive or analytical thinking and how participants construct and justify their judgments, revealing interactions between analytical and intuitive processes.

This study contributes to research on how youth evaluate credibility in complex media environments by demonstrating how intuitive processes interact with analytical reasoning in evaluating AI-generated content. A key innovative aspect of the study is the use of a play-based method to examine how youth assess the credibility and trustworthiness of AI, which enables the inclusion of younger age groups. In doing so, it points to gaps between theoretical models of reasoning and the everyday social media experiences of youth, offering guidance for media literacy education that fosters critical evaluation behaviors by engaging both intuitive and analytical processes.

CYM04 Navigating AI in the Daily Lives of Children and Young People

PP 0149 Artificial intelligence, human–machine communication and interpersonal communication competences in childhood and youth: A systematic literature review

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The growing integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the everyday lives of children and young people has generated an expanding body of research, particularly concerning forms of interaction between humans and intelligent systems. Despite this increase, the literature remains conceptually and methodologically fragmented, and systematic analyses that explicitly connect AI use—within the field of Human–Machine Communication (HMC)—to the development, mediation or transformation of interpersonal communication competences in childhood and youth are still scarce. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to map and critically analyse the scientific literature indexed in Scopus that examines the use of AI by children and young people, with a specific focus on communicational and relational dimensions.

Methodologically, the study adopts a systematic literature review design, guided by the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The search strategy was developed iteratively in the Scopus database, using search strings that articulated three core conceptual blocks: (i) Artificial Intelligence and conversational agents (e.g., chatbots, social robots, virtual assistants), (ii) children and young people, and (iii) interpersonal communication, social interaction and Human–Machine Communication. Following the stabilisation of the final search query, filters were applied regarding document type (articles and reviews) and language of publication (English, Portuguese and Spanish), resulting in the identification of 507 records for the selection phase. The systematic screening of titles and abstracts, followed by full-text analysis and data extraction, is currently ongoing.

Preliminary findings already allow for the identification of a set of emerging analytical categories. These include: (a) the conceptualisation of AI as a communicational and relational agent; (b) the mediation of human peer interactions through AI-based systems; (c) the impact of child–machine interaction on the development of competences such as empathy, cooperation, emotional regulation and turn-taking; and (d) ethical and normative tensions associated with the substitution, complementarity or reconfiguration of interpersonal relationships. Additionally, the review reveals substantial methodological and conceptual heterogeneity, as well as a predominance of instrumental approaches to communication, often at the expense of sociological and critical perspectives on childhood.

It is argued that this systematic review will contribute to the consolidation of HMC research applied to childhood and youth, offering an analytical framework that foregrounds children and young people as competent social actors in their communicational relationships with AI systems. The study further highlights implications for future research, educational practices and public policy development.

CYM04 Navigating AI in the Daily Lives of Children and Young People

PP 0150 Mapping AI literacy integration in higher education: Challenges, responses, and practices

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The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in higher education is transforming how knowledge is produced, assessed, and legitimised, while simultaneously intensifying concerns around academic integrity, epistemic trust, and AI-driven disinformation (e.g., Rojas Contreras et al., 2023; Chan & Colloton, 2024). These developments challenge established models of media and information literacy (MIL), calling for future-oriented frameworks that integrate AI literacy, ethical reasoning, and civic responsibility (e.g., Buele & Llerena-Aguirre, 2025; Ngoveni, 2025). This study presents work in progress from the Erasmus+ project AI-LITERATE, which investigates how European higher education institutions are responding to these challenges, with a focus on youth and disinformation resilience.

The project examines how AI literacy, institutional agency, and disinformation resilience are conceptualised and operationalised across five countries (Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Poland, and Belgium). It asks: How are higher education institutions integrating generative AI into institutional policies and educational practices? How are issues of ethics, responsibility, and disinformation addressed in these institutional policies and practices? What futures of media and information literacy are being imagined and enacted through these institutional responses and practices?

Methodologically, the research integrates a literature review on AI literacy in higher education with a comparative analysis of policy frameworks at European and national levels, institutional guidelines and policies, relevant syllabi, and a structured programme of national roundtables. The study adopts a macro–meso–micro analytical framework (e.g., Serpa and Ferreira, 2019) within a mixed-methods design. At the macro level, policy frameworks are examined; at the meso level, institutional regulations and ethical guidelines are analysed; and at the micro level, course materials are reviewed. All documents are

assessed using a shared analytical matrix structured around six dimensions: agency and responsibility; ethics, integrity, and transparency; disinformation and critical literacy; risk management; equity and accessibility; and pedagogical integration.

In addition, data from five national roundtables – organised in Italy, Croatia, Poland, Belgium and Portugal and collected using a standardised template to ensure comparability with the document analysis – complement the study by capturing the perspectives of faculty, students, institutional stakeholders, and policymakers who are directly involved in the development and implementation of AI-related policies and practices. Each roundtable produces a country-specific analytical report, which is subsequently synthesised into a comparative European report.

While data collection is ongoing, preliminary findings suggest a growing emphasis on ethical governance and institutional guidance, contrasted with uneven pedagogical integration and limited incorporation of disinformation literacy into AI-related curricula. By September 2026, the project is expected to deliver a comparative mapping of AI literacy maturity in higher education, identifying patterns of convergence and divergence across national contexts.

The study argues that the future of MIL in an AI-driven Europe depends on repositioning AI literacy as a civic and epistemic competence. By combining standardised institutional mapping with deliberative roundtables, the study contributes a transferable framework for anticipating and shaping responsible, democratic futures of higher education.

CYM04 Navigating AI in the Daily Lives of Children and Young People

PP 0151 The role of generative AI in teens' exploration and management of intimacy, sexuality, and romantic relationships

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As part of a larger national study on Intimacy, Gender, and Digital Practices, this research examines how adolescents use Generative AI (GAI) to address sexual and romantic concerns. GAI has become increasingly pervasive in everyday life (Han et al. 2025), but it becomes even more significant when considering the role GAI plays for adolescents who are experiencing their first affective relationships and related intimacy, gender, and sexuality issues.

Studies about GAI and affective or sexual relationships have primarily focused on the existence of forms of romantic affection that users may develop toward GAI, due to its anthropomorphic nature (Song et al., 2022), or on users' engagement with GAI to replicate romantic interactions or make them more satisfying (Saga et al.,2025). It has also been examined how GAI can function as a stimulus for sexual purposes, generating sexualized content for personal consumption or to stimulate romantic partners (Willoughby et al., 2025). Few studies have investigated how adolescents use and make sense of GAI in their intimate lives to manage sexuality, affective relationships, and sexual orientation-related dynamics.

The RQs guiding this study are:

- How does adolescents' use of GAI shape the construction of digital intimacy?
- What level of trust do adolescents place in GAI when managing their affective/sexual relationships?
- Are there differences in the ways heterosexual adolescents engage with GAI compared to LGBTQIA+ peers?

Through a participatory method, 49 interviews with Italian teenagers (16–8 yo) have been conducted and qualitatively analyzed (Mayring, 2021).

The results show that GAI is a companion to whom adolescents can turn for advice at any time. It helps resolve the uncertainty that is inherent in relationships by providing immediate, situation-specific support, extending to the interpretation of others' behaviors and the real-time management of relationships (e.g., how to respond to a potential partner's message).

GAI compensates for knowledge gaps, filling the voids left by primary socialization agents (family and educators), particularly in affective, gender, and sexual education. Moreover, interactions with GAI can be personal, personalized, and continuous, making it highly competitive when compared to institutional actors.

GAI turns out to be even more supportive than educational and parental contexts when considering the higher level of use among LGBTQIA+ teenagers for intimate purposes compared to heterosexual ones. For the former, the portability of these platforms and their confidentiality provide an intimate and protected space for disclosure and for expressing doubts, fears, and insecurities related to their sexuality.

Even if GAI compensates for knowledge gaps about intimate topics, it is not primarily knowledge-oriented but rather used for immediate problem-solving of emotional issues that may arise on other platforms (WhatsApp). Teenagers also express skepticism about the reliability of GAI for intimate matters. This mistrust does not concern relationship management itself but is limited to the sexual knowledge that GAI can provide. Such skepticism stems from the univocal nature of AI-generated responses compared to search engines, such as Google. GAI tends to offer a single answer to questions that limit teens' critical reflection, leaving little room for their agency.

CYM05 Youth Empowerment, Rights, and Responsibility in Digital Spaces

PP 0290 Digitally brave. Stimulating positive bystander behavior in cyberbullying among secondary school pupils through an interactive narrative intervention

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Cyberbullying can have a substantial impact on the well-being of its victims and bystanders (Kwan et al., 2020). Bystanders can play a crucial role in encouraging or discouraging cyberbullying, for instance by reporting hurtful incidents or showing their disagreement, but often remain passive (Karasavva & Mikami, 2024). The present study contributes to the growing body of research on cyberbullying interventions directed towards bystanders by developing and testing an intervention presented as an interactive narrative. This format has been shown to be an effective intervention strategy (Scholl et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2020). We have developed a role-playing interactive narrative allowing players to adopt the bystander perspective. At various points in the narrative, interactors can choose how they respond to cyberbullying as a bystander (e.g.,comforting, reporting, confronting the bully) after which they experience the consequences of the choices made.

This intervention was tested in a cluster-randomized controlled trial in Dutch secondary schools (first and second grade). To test the effectiveness of the interactive narrative, two extra intervention conditions were developed: a non-interactive version of the interactive narrative and an expository text with the same information but without the narrative. These three conditions were randomly distributed over different school classes. Within each class, pupils were individually exposed to the same intervention condition. The main DVs in this study were persuasive effects (beliefs, attitudes and intentions regarding cyberbullying and positive bystander behavior) (Moyer-Gusé & Dale, 2017) and perceived self-efficacy (feeling confident about executing positive bystander behavior) (Sargioti et al., 2023), together with narrative experience (identification with and empathy for the main character and transportation to the story world) (Appel et al., 2015; de Graaf et al., 2012; Fabi et al., 2019; Huang & Fung, 2024). The measurements were done right before the intervention (T0), right after the intervention (T1), and 5–7 weeks after the intervention (T2). In total, 633 pupils participated in the study, divided over 78 classes and 8 schools at nearly all educational levels.

The results showed that the interactive narrative yielded higher transportation to the story world and higher identification with and empathy for the bystander than the traditional narrative. Persuasive effects were equal for all intervention formats immediately after exposure (T1). After 5–7 weeks (T2), all persuasive effects disappeared for the traditional narrative and expository text, but the persuasive effects of the beliefs persisted for the interactive narrative. Finally, the interactive narrative consistently led to higher perceived self-efficacy than the traditional narrative and outperformed the expository text on most self-efficacy subscales. The traditional narrative and expository text did not differ in terms of self-efficacy.

This study demonstrates the potential of interactive narratives, and helps to optimise interventions against cyberbullying and ultimately reduce the number of victims.

CYM05 Youth Empowerment, Rights, and Responsibility in Digital Spaces

PP 0291 Beyond protection and participation: Theorizing recognition rights in children's digital environments

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Debates about children's digital rights have largely centred on protection from harm and participation in digital culture. Recent developments in regulation and governance – including proposals to introduce or strengthen age thresholds for social media use – illustrate how protection has increasingly become a key organising principle as well as a moral argument.

While such measures address important concerns, they also raise questions about how exclusion from digital platforms may affect groups of children and young people for whom online communication forms an important part of everyday social life. This includes young people living with disability, many of whom rely on digital environments for connection, identity work, and access to supportive communities.

This paper develops an empirically informed and theoretically grounded framework for *recognition rights* as a possible third dimension of children's digital rights. Building on critical media access studies (Alper, 2021) the paper approaches digital rights not only as a matter of technical availability or formal participation, but also as involving questions of cultural recognition and legitimacy. The framework is informed by research examining how young people living with disability navigate social media in everyday life.

Three interrelated aspects of recognition rights are outlined. The first, representational sovereignty, concerns how young people seek to manage the visibility and meaning of difference in digital spaces. The second, cultural participation rights, highlights how children and young people contribute to shaping wider understandings of youth, ability, and belonging through their ordinary digital practices, sometimes reproducing and sometimes unsettling dominant norms (Johansen, 2024). The third, affective justice, draws on work on social access and embodied participation in digital culture (Kaur &

Saukko, 2022) to describe the emotional and relational labour that may accompany digital participation for those who experience marginalisation.

These perspectives offer a way of understanding digital rights as not only a matter of safety and inclusion, but also of recognition. They also highlight tensions that arise when protection-oriented regulation intersects with young people's everyday needs for social connection and forms of cultural legitimacy, echoing broader critiques of what constitutes "meaningful access" (Ellcessor, 2016).

The presentation will outline this framework and illustrate it with examples from qualitative research involving young people living with disability. The intention is to open discussions about how recognition might be conceptualised within children's digital rights, and how this perspective may inform future research and debates about governance and everyday media use.

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CYM05 Youth Empowerment, Rights, and Responsibility in Digital Spaces

PP 0292 Youth perceptions of empowerment through cultural game jams

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Scholarly discussions across media studies, education, and psychology often frame video games in terms of their benefits and risks, highlighting their potential for learning and personal development alongside concerns about possible harms, including gaming disorder. The present study examined young people's perceptions and experiences of empowerment through their participation in Cultural Game Jams. The conceptualisation of empowerment is ambiguous. Empowerment is understood here through a critical social theory of youth empowerment, which emphasises collective action to create social change (Jennings et al., 2006). Participation in cultural game-making provides young people with opportunities to critically engage with and reflect on their everyday media experiences, as well as to transform culture. The concept of Cultural Game Jams — linking game-making with cultural heritage, participation, and co-creation — has been developed in recent research, particularly within the context of PROJECT NAME (Author1 et al., 2025; Eriksson et al., 2025). The Values at Play (VAP) design framework (Flanagan & Nissenbaum, 2007) was used to intentionally embed European values such as democracy and freedom in games.

A reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) was conducted by three researchers following Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase inductive approach, generating codes and themes through constructive and reflexive engagement with the data. Data were collected through interviews, surveys, and game pitches with youth participants in a Cultural Game Jam (CGJ). The CGJ took place in REGION, COUNTRY, from 4 to 7 February 2024. A total of 38 young people aged between 16 and 25 years (M = 19.52; SD = 2.54) participated. The CGJ theme centred on a historically significant secret meeting in COUNTRY that played a decisive role in the military movement leading to the end of the dictatorship.

From the RTA, three themes emerged: *Cultural Game Jams as Social Events*, *Learning in Cultural Game Jams*, and *Youth as Cultural Game Makers*. Participants engaged with the material and spatial dimensions of the theme as a socially situated experience in REGION and valued the richness of interactions with cultural experts, game industry professionals, researchers and peers. In relation to learning in CGJs, the most influential activity was a guided tour of the historically significant building where the secret meeting took place, which participants regarded as crucial to their games' ideation processes.

Regarding Youth as Cultural Game Makers, participants embraced their roles as creators of culture through games, often critically reflecting their achievements while expressing pride and overall satisfaction with the experience. Nine game prototypes were developed, inspired by struggles for freedom and liberation from authoritarian regimes, and by the role of player or citizen choices in preserving democracy and freedom. The findings demonstrate that young people raised awareness of the importance of freedom and democracy, with these values intrinsically embedded in the games they created. The successful implementation of the CGJ is attributed to the extended duration of the event and the continuous cultural support provided throughout, highlighting the importance of time and real-time feedback in supporting meaningful learning experiences.

CYM05 Youth Empowerment, Rights, and Responsibility in Digital Spaces

PP 0293 Understanding adolescents' withdrawal from political talk in private and (semi-) public spheres

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Although youth participation in political talk is often described as declining (Henn & Foard, 2014), recent research shows that disengagement is not simply inactivity: Adolescents may deliberately avoid political conversations (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2022). This study investigates why young people may avoid political talk in private settings (peer and family discussions) and in (semi-)public contexts, thus communicative spaces where opinions can form between both private interactions and public debates (Habermas, 2022), such as social media. By exploring barriers that hinder political talk, this research extends beyond traditional participation-focused explanations to highlight a frequently overlooked aspect of political socialization.

Theoretically, Habermas' (1989) concept of the public sphere helps explain adolescents' hesitation to engage in (semi-) public contexts: When spaces for political discussion are perceived as inaccessible, adult-dominated, or hostile, adolescents may withdraw rather than participate (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2022). Similarly, Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory (1974) posits that individuals refrain from expressing opinions if they believe their views are unpopular or fear social exclusion. Political efficacy also remains central: Low internal or external efficacy can contribute to avoidance of political engagement (Levy & Akiva, 2019). Finally, developmental frameworks are considered. Early adolescence (10–12) serves as a formative period for political values and beliefs. Starting from middle adolescence (13–16), opportunities for participation increase while identities consolidate (Eckstein et al., 2012).

This study, conducted in Austria during the election year 2024, draws from 47 peer group discussions with adolescents (aged 12–19) from diverse educational tracks. Discussions involved 3–10 ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.28$) participants and lasted between 19 and 41 minutes. The analysis followed a qualitative content analysis approach after Kuckartz (2018).

Findings show that in (semi-)public spheres like social media, limited political discussion is often linked to concerns about social exposure and low political efficacy. Many adolescents avoid posting because they fear judgment, as David (16–17) said: "So basically, we all censor ourselves, so we don't get into hot water." The long-term visibility of online content hence appears to affect self-censorship with adolescents feeling partly observed and vulnerable (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Pew Research Center, 2022).

Adolescents also avoid political discussions when they feel unqualified or powerless. Fatima (16–17) noted: "There are political debates occasionally, but I mostly stay out of them because I know very little," suggesting that avoidance often reflects perceived inadequacy and low political efficacy rather than a lack of interest.

Many avoid discussing politics in peer groups to maintain harmony. Politics is often perceived as too complex and tedious to discuss, as spending time with friends is "the only time you actually want to unwind and relax" (Mary, 18–19). Avoiding politics, therefore, helps preserve enjoyable peer interactions (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2022).

To foster youth political engagement, interventions should reduce fear of social judgment by providing safe spaces where they can express their opinions freely. Programs aimed at enhancing political efficacy, such as educational initiatives or mentoring, can help adolescents feel that their voices are valued. Together, by reducing fear and boosting perceived influence, these efforts may encourage more active participation and discussion, enabling adolescents to move beyond self-censorship and disengagement.

CYM05 Youth Empowerment, Rights, and Responsibility in Digital Spaces

PP 0294 Children's democratic agency in the digital realm: The paradigmatic case of misinformation

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In a world where digital media increasingly shapes how children learn, connect, and participate, safeguarding their rights online has become a pressing democratic imperative. Our paper advances current understandings of children's democratic agency in the digital realm by considering their encounters with misinformation as a paradigmatic case. In 1989, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) laid responsibility on adults to ensure children's participation in society and to protect them from harm while doing so (1989). According to General Comment No. 25 to the UNCRC, these rights apply in the digital realm as well (2021). Children's practices with digital media and technologies are many-facetted and interwoven with everyday practices that take place across arenas and social configurations (OECD, 2025). In many cases, they can be viewed as "the glue" of modern socialisation and coordination in straightforwardly practical manners as well as cultural consumption and participation. All these aspects can be viewed as components in democratic citizenship, inasmuch as they lay the foundation for participatory practices.

The internet presents complex challenges to overcome in relation to the UNCRC responsibility to enable participation safe from harm. One such challenge is the spread of digital misinformation, threatening democracy globally (World Economic Forum, 2024). Misinformation can foster distrust, lead to misperceptions and can fuel polarisation (Li & Yang, 2024; Pummerer et al., 2022), . Meanwhile, dealing with misinformation through legal measures is fundamentally challenging, as they must not threaten freedom of speech (c.f. Livingstone & Sylwander, 2025).

Our interdisciplinary project "Safeguarding Children's Democratic Agency: Tools to navigate mis- and disinformation on social media (SafeChilDe)" brings together legal research on implemented law and policies regarding children and digital misinformation with a mixed-methods study of 5–12-year-old children's experiences with digital misinformation. The results of these studies feed into the design of a gamified learning experience by which 10–12-year-olds are invited to reflect critically on what motivates misinformation and how to detect it. The purpose of this paper is to bring the three aspects of the project together to clarify how we can aid children's democratic agency through 1. inquiring children's perspectives on pertinent phenomena such as misinformation, 2. competence-building and literacy interventions, and 3. law- and policy-based shielding. In essence: how can we combine such efforts in a way that ultimately strengthens children's rights in the digital realm?

We will present a model that clarifies the connections between the above aspects. In connection to the task of striking a balance between participation and protection as per the UNCRC, we will consider the fundamental legal principle of proportionality (Duarte and Sampaio, 2018), and ask: which measures are necessary to suitably safeguard children's democratic agency from the harms of digital misinformation? To do so, we will map the actors relevant to this problem and consider how children's experiences with and perceptions of digital misinformation call said actors to action.

CYM06 Media Literacy and Education

PP 0260 Media literacy in European educational legislation: A comparative case study of Finland and Spain

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Media literacy has become a strategic priority in European educational policies in response to the challenges posed by digitalization, misinformation, and the transformation of the media ecosystem (European Commission, 2020; Sádaba & Salaverría, 2023). Despite this recognition, its incorporation into national educational legislation varies significantly across member states, both in terms of explicitness and scope (McDougall et al., 2018; Pérez-Femenía & Iglesias-García, 2022). This study examines how media literacy is integrated into the educational frameworks of Finland and Spain through a qualitative multiple case study design. The selection of these countries responds to a purposeful contrast identified in previous research: Finland represents a highly structured and explicitly integrated model, where media literacy is embedded in national curricula, teacher education, and ministerial-level strategies (Palsa & Salomaa, 2020; 2023; Kupiainen, 2019). In contrast, Spain exemplifies a more transversal and implicit approach, in which media literacy is incorporated across subjects and competencies without a fully centralized or standalone policy framework (Gil & Marzal-Felici, 2024; Navarro Pérez, 2024).

The methodological design is based on a systematic analysis of official documents, including national laws, curricula and policy strategies. The data are organized using a coding system guided by European and international frameworks for media and digital literacy, including DigComp, the Council of Europe, and UNESCO guidelines. The analysis is carried out in two complementary phases: first, an intra-case analysis to identify the normative profile of each country, examining the level of integration, curricular coverage, and pedagogical orientation of media literacy; second, an inter-case comparison to explore similarities, differences, and potential transferable practices between Finland and Spain.

Results reveal a pronounced contrast between Finland's comprehensive and systematically implemented model and Spain's cross-curricular, partially implicit approach. This comparative perspective provides insights into how media literacy can be institutionalized differently across European educational contexts and highlights the implications for curriculum design, teacher support, and policy development.

The study helps to understand the variety of ways media literacy is included in European education and suggests which approaches might be applied in other countries. It informs both academic discussions and practical policy considerations, aiming to enhance critical, responsible, and participatory media use among students. By combining a systematic analysis of official documentation with a structured comparative framework, this research emphasizes the opportunities and challenges of embedding media literacy in national educational legislation and provides a methodological approach that can be applied to further comparative studies in European contexts.

CYM06 Media Literacy and Education

PP 0261 Beyond bans: how Portuguese teachers understand student smartphone use

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Smartphones are the most popular digital device among European youth (Smahel et al., 2020), raising concerns — among scholars, policymakers, and the general public — regarding its potential negative effects on youth. In this context, debates and policy around smartphone bans and regulations in schools have gained international traction, despite the lack of evidence regarding the impact of these strategies in improving students' behaviour, academic performance, or well-being (Rahali et al., 2024). In Portugal, a recent decree-law — implemented in summer 2025 — banned smartphones in schools for students up to the second cycle of primary education.

This paper explores Portuguese teachers' perspectives on students' smartphone usage, aiming to understand emergent challenges and transformations. To do this, we rely on two datasets: 20 semi-structured interviews conducted in spring 2023 with ICT teachers across Portugal regarding students' digital culture and skills, as well as their perspectives on smartphone use and policy in formal education. Second, we analyse ongoing ethnographic observations (conducted from November 2025 to April 2026) at a school in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area attended by students in the third cycle of primary education and high school.

In interviews, teachers appear to dismiss youths' digital cultures as unimportant or unproductive, imagining students as passive and uncritical consumers of digital content. What they perceive to be young people's central digital practices — socializing and seeking entertainment — are deemed to hold little value, with several interviewees describing them as "superficial," tied to "immediate pleasure," and not raising students' "cultural level."

Smartphone use in schools raises concerns among our interviewees, who associate it with students' lack of concentration, social isolation, and instances of cyberbullying. However, most teachers do not deem the prohibition of mobile phones to be the ideal solution. Some point to the danger of a "forbidden fruit effect," while others consider that it would be difficult to enforce and unrealistic in a context where schools are understaffed and lacking basic material resources. Other teachers regard that banning smartphones would mean losing an important pedagogical tool, especially since most schools have poor digital infrastructure (e.g., faulty wi-fi, old computers).

Preliminary results from the ethnographic observations show that students use their devices frequently, both inside and outside of the classroom. Telling students to put their mobile phones away or place them on the teacher's desk is common practice before class begins. However, this sometimes creates tensions, with students resisting and arguing their devices are "private property." Teachers themselves use their smartphones for classroom management (e.g. calling a students' parent when they are misbehaving). Both teachers and school staff often discuss smartphone usage as having changed schools for the worse, frequently adopting a nostalgic tone with references to their own childhood as "simpler."

Overall, teachers agree that students' smartphones usage is a major challenge, being considered detrimental to students' social lives and disruptive when it comes to classroom dynamics. Nonetheless, they situate this issue within broader systemic failures — underfunding, poor infrastructure, and overstretched staff — considering smartphone bans to be both impractical and insufficient.

CYM06 Media Literacy and Education

PP 0262 Development of instruments for examining the reception of multimodal stories in the context of multimodal literacy development

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Contemporary understandings of text emphasize its multimodal nature, whereby meaning is generated not solely through linguistic, but also through visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial modalities. Today's children participate in such multimodal communication practices from an early age, which substantially transforms the ways in which they receive, interpret, and construct meaning. Consequently, new demands are placed on educational systems regarding literacy development, which in the 21st century is no longer understood merely as the ability to read and write, but as a dynamic set of interrelated competencies—reading, media, information, and cultural—necessary for understanding and creating meaning across diverse modes of expression.

The theoretical framework of this study draws on the concepts of multiliteracies and multimodal literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 1997; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Jewitt, 2008; Serafini, 2015), which highlight the interdependence of linguistic, visual, and performative codes in the construction of meaning. Additionally, the study builds on reception theory (Jauss, 1970), which posits that the reader is not a passive recipient of a message but an active participant in interpreting a text.

In the context of children's reception of multimodal narratives, meaning is constructed not only on a cognitive level but also on perceptual and emotional levels, mediated through various sensory–semiotic channels.

When storytelling is transferred from a reading to a performative context, as in the case of kamishibai, reception also acquires bodily, affective, and interactive dimensions (Fischer-Lichte, 2015; McGowan, 2015; Lwin, 2020).

At the centre of the planned doctoral research is an examination of the relationship between the modality through which a story is mediated and the ways in which students process multimodal content. Special attention is given to performative–narrative forms such as kamishibai, a Japanese picture-based narrative medium integrating verbal, visual, and performative channels, thereby constituting a distinctive form of multimodal narrative. In this study, multimodal literacy is operationalized through five interconnected aspects: comprehension of content and event sequence, recall of information, vocabulary understanding, level of interest in the story, and students' creative expression.

The aim of the research is to present the conceptual framework and to develop, test and validate research instruments capable of precisely examining children's reception of multimodal stories. In the pilot phase, two instruments are tested: the Story Reception Questionnaire and the Vocabulary Acquisition Questionnaire. The study will be conducted with a sample of 80 fourth-grade primary school students to examine the clarity, temporal suitability, and initial validity of the instruments.

The developed instruments encompass two complementary aspects of reception: the cognitive aspect, which includes content comprehension, and the linguistic aspect, focused on the acquisition of target vocabulary from the text. The resulting data will be used to compare the effects of different story mediation modalities on children's understanding and construction of meaning.

It is expected that the pilot study findings will confirm the importance of multimodal approaches in fostering students' reading engagement, comprehension, and creative expression, and will contribute to the development of contemporary pedagogical approaches to literacy in early education.

Keywords

kamishibai; multimodal literacy; reception; pilot study

CYM06 Media Literacy and Education

PP 0263 Critical media literacy and AI: From TikTok analysis to multimodal pedagogical design

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This presentation introduces a series of educational resources designed to foster young people's critical and responsible engagement with Artificial Intelligence (AI) embedded in TikTok—one of the most influential platforms among youth. TikTok's success is driven by ByteDance's algorithmic recommender system, crystallized in the "For You" feed, which shapes visibility and cultural production (Kaye et al., 2022). AI is also increasingly present in content creation through filters, editing tools, and generative features, making TikTok a key site for studying algorithmic and AI-mediated practices.

To inform the design of these resources, we combined two complementary studies. First, we conducted a platform analysis of TikTok videos tagged with AI-related hashtags (e.g., #AIfilter) using scraping (Apify) and visualization (Tableau) to identify high-engagement posts, followed by (AI-assisted) qualitative coding (NVivo) of videos and comments on the most-commented video. Second, we ran a year-long ethnography with 19 young people to contextualize platform practices and perceptions.

Our findings show that AI operates on TikTok at two intertwined levels: distribution and creation. Participants in our ethnographic study emphasized that becoming visible requires learning to navigate and "control" the algorithm, often through speculative strategies—such as timing posts or using specific hashtags—rather than technical knowledge. In conversations with participants we also discussed concerns about privacy, misinformation, and ethical responsibility. On the other hand, AI-driven filters, particularly those involving face and body transformation, are found to be popular among the users, audience discourse centering on appearance and identity and revealing tensions between playful experimentation and pressures linked to beauty norms. These findings underscore the need for a deeper algorithmic and AI literacy.

In response, we developed multimodal resources that could be applicable for diverse educational settings, including:

1. A seven-chapter guide addressing themes such as algorithmic "bubbles," misinformation, privacy, and AI filters and self-image, combining conceptual explanations with educational activities and curated resources.
2. Short videos created by young participants, targeted at youth audiences.
3. Educator-focused videos produced in collaboration with a cultural organization dedicated to promoting audiovisual literacy.
4. A podcast series featuring professionals and youth voices.

We will also share some insights from pilot workshops held in a secondary school, highlighting how these materials support critical reflection and creative engagement with AI. By translating empirical findings into practical resources, this work

contributes to equip young people and educators to critically navigate algorithmic environments and AI-mediated cultural practices, much needed habilities in our current society.

CYM06 Media Literacy and Education

PP 0264 Speaking about children without children? Mobile phone policies in European schools and the marginalisation of young people's voices

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Across Europe, mobile phone use in schools has become a highly prominent policy issue, frequently framed as a response to concerns about distraction, addiction, mental health, and declining social interaction among children and young people. While these debates are often presented as being "in the best interests of the child", they tend to be dominated by adult-centric perspectives that prioritise control, restriction, and protection. This raises critical questions about how children are represented in policy discourse, whose voices are legitimised, and to what extent children's rights to participation and expression are recognised in decisions that directly affect their everyday school lives.

This paper aims to analyse how mobile phone policies in schools are constructed across the 27 Member States of the European Union. It draws on theoretical debates on children's digital lives that challenge risk-dominated narratives and highlight tensions between protectionist approaches and children's agency, participation, and digital citizenship. The study is informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the right to be heard, alongside critical scholarship on media regulation, digital well-being, and media literacy as sites of power and governance.

Empirically, the paper is based on a comparative qualitative documentary analysis of policy-related texts produced at national, regional, and institutional levels. Data collection followed a systematic search strategy using predefined Boolean queries (e.g. "smartphones/mobile phones", "schools", "policies" combined with each country's name), complemented by targeted exploration of official Ministry of Education websites and referenced institutional, media, and stakeholder sources. The analysis is structured through a comprehensive coding grid that captures policy trends (prohibition, regulation, free use), policy status and scope, regulated devices and spaces, stated exceptions (notably pedagogical use), and the presence—or absence—of media and digital literacy initiatives.

Crucially, the analytical framework foregrounds questions of voice, representation, and power. It examines who speaks in and through these documents (politicians, experts, teachers, parents, industry actors), on whose behalf they speak, and whether children and young people are consulted, quoted, or meaningfully acknowledged. The findings reveal a strong dominance of adult-driven discourses centred on risk, discipline, and behavioural control, with children largely positioned as passive subjects of regulation rather than as competent social actors with situated knowledge of their own media practices.

By critically mapping how children are talked about—but rarely listened to—in European school mobile phone policies, this paper contributes to debates on children, youth and media by questioning the democratic legitimacy of current policy approaches and arguing for the inclusion of children's perspectives in the governance of their mediated school environments.

CYM07 Mediated Childhoods in the Context of the Home

PP 0372 Digital inclusion at home: Intergenerational digital media practices among families with a migration history

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6–7, Roblox and TikTok. Children's everyday media practices increasingly unfold on platforms that parents do not always fully understand. While children's digital learning mostly takes place informally within the family context, many parents express concerns about what their children do online, but struggle to translate these into parenting practices. These everyday struggles point to broader issues of socio-digital inequalities that endure despite material access to digital technologies (Molla et al., 2024).

Most research about children, media and digital parenting covers Western and highly educated families, though the aim of this paper is therefore to provide insights into the intergenerational experiences of families with a migration history. To do so, this paper takes an emic approach and applies an intersectional lens to explore how digital inclusion and exclusion takes place for families with migration histories. Moving away from deficit-oriented frameworks, it explores factors such as gender, ethnicity, cultural background, class, and age that shape how families position themselves in relation to digital media (Alper et al., 2016). Particular attention is paid to affective dimensions such as belonging, trust, and negotiations about AI-driven systems that increasingly shape children's everyday media use.

The paper asks how digital inclusion is shaped through intergenerational practices in migrant families and how children and parents negotiate roles, responsibilities and agency around digital media. Empirically, the paper draws on an ethnographic study with 20 families with a migration history. It focuses on families of Turkish, Moroccan, and Surinamese descent, as their perspectives remain underrepresented in research on digital inclusion and digital parenting. The study includes parents and

children aged 8 to 15 years old in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, a highly diverse international harbor city marked by growing inequality.

The ethnographic methods combine semi-structured interviews, observations in the home, and intergenerational participatory design activities. The latter is used to co-create prototypes for mobile applications that tap into inclusive, future-oriented media imaginaries and foreground children's and parents' mutual perspectives, challenging top-down assumptions about digital needs.

Findings reveal that intergenerational learning and negotiation around digital media includes the reversal of parenting roles in which children regularly act as digital mediators for their parents. We explain how children and parents navigate intersecting identities across home, school, religious spaces, play, and friendships and how this impacts their digital media use. By foregrounding intergenerational family life and children's lived experiences we offer bottom-up insights for digital inclusion policy, media education, and intergenerational participatory design approaches that aim to give greater agency to populations that are being marginalized.

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CYM07 Mediated Childhoods in the Context of the Home

PP 0373 Parental support, parent-teen communication, and adolescent AI use for health: A mediation analysis

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Teenagers are increasingly using AI for sensitive topics such as mental and physical health. This trend is concerning for multiple reasons: AI may provide false or even detrimental information (Park et al., 2023), and research has shown teenagers relying on AI for social support is associated with increased loneliness and anxiety (Carter & Grace, 2025; Herbener & Damholdt, 2025). In contrast, parents are an important source for health-related information/advice (Lau et al., 1990), and parental social support is a well-established predictor of adolescent wellbeing (Wu & Lee, 2022). Given the associated risk of AI use for health questions, we wanted to test if perceived parental support can reduce the likelihood of using AI for such questions. We hypothesized that adolescents who perceive higher parental social support would be more likely to talk to their parents about health-related topics (H1). We further predicted that more frequent conversations with parents about health topics would be associated with lower AI use for health-related questions (H2). Finally, we hypothesized that the association between parental social support and AI use for health-related questions would be mediated by adolescents' conversations with their parents about health topics (H3).

To test this, we collected survey responses in schools from teenagers (N = 1981, Mage = 15.98, SDage = 1.58, 47% female) regarding their use of AI for health-related topics. We analyzed the data using a mediation model with parental social support as a predictor, parent-teen health discussions as a mediator, and AI use for health as an outcome while controlling for age, gender and wellbeing.

While we found evidence for partial mediation, the results revealed two partially competing pathways. First, as expected, we found a direct negative effect of parental support on AI use while controlling for the mediator, indicating that lower social support leads to increased AI use for health. Second, as hypothesized, social support positively predicted parent-teen discussions. However, contrary to expectations, parent-teen discussions had a small positive effect on AI use.

These results reveal two pathways: compensatory AI use, where teenagers with lower social support rely more on AI for health-related questions and complementary use where teenagers who discuss health with parents are also more likely to use AI for health-related questions. This unexpected complementary pattern might be explained by confounding variables, such as increased health concerns that lead adolescents to seek information from both parents and AI. These findings suggest that parental support should not be viewed as complete protection against young people's use of AI for health-related issues. Rather, we argue in our presentation that it can and should be considered a crucial factor in promoting informed and critical use of AI tools. The presentation discusses this argument in more detail with a view to developing public health strategies that involve both parents and young people.

CYM07 Mediated Childhoods in the Context of the Home

PP 0374 Mediating digital childhoods at home: Family practices in preschool children's media use in Istanbul

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Children's everyday encounters with digital media are increasingly shaped within the home, where families play a central role in mediating access, meanings, and practices. Early childhood represents a particularly sensitive period in which digital media use is closely intertwined with care, learning, and emotional development. While existing research has examined parental mediation strategies, there remains a need for contextually grounded, ethically attentive studies that capture how family mediation unfolds in the lived experiences of preschool children and their caregivers in Turkish context. Addressing this gap, this study explores how families in Istanbul mediate preschool children's (aged 3–6) digital media practices at home, with a focus on positive and educational forms of family mediation and the involvement of extended family members.

The study is designed as a qualitative extension of a nationally representative survey supported by the British Council's ISPF programme and aims to enrich quantitative findings with in-depth, experience-based insights. Through semi-structured interviews, the research will examine how caregivers initiate, facilitate, scaffold, extend, and meaningfully connect children's digital media use to everyday family routines, play, and learning activities. Particular attention is given to ethical considerations of care, responsibility, and agency in early childhood digital media use, as well as to how mediation practices are negotiated within family relationships.

The planned sample consists of 18 households in Istanbul, selected through maximum variation sampling to capture diverse family contexts. In each household, at least one primary caregiver will be interviewed, and where possible, an additional adult family member, such as a grandparent or adult sibling, will also participate. Interviews are expected to last between 45 and 60 minutes and will focus on daily digital media routines, household rules, mediation strategies, perceived developmental influences, and family dynamics surrounding digital media use. All interviews will be audio-recorded with informed consent, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analytical process will combine sensitising concepts from family mediation and digital childhoods research with themes emerging inductively from participants' accounts.

By foregrounding families' lived experiences and everyday practices, this study seeks to contribute to children, youth, and media scholarship that is ethically grounded, inclusive, and socially relevant. In line with the aims of the ECREA Children, Youth and Media section, the research emphasises methodological reflexivity and contextual nuance, offering insights into how family mediation shapes young children's digital media experiences within contemporary home environments.

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CYM07 Mediated Childhoods in the Context of the Home

PP 0375 Digital competencies and mediated childhood: Parental regulation and digital competency levels among Alpha Generation children in Transylvania

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The Alpha Generation represents the first cohort to grow up entirely within a digitally mediated environment, where everyday communication, learning processes, and forms of entertainment are deeply intertwined with networked technologies. From early childhood, digital devices and online platforms shape media consumption patterns and also the development of digital competencies, communication habits, and emerging forms of agency. At the same time, parental mediation practices and the growing use of digital supervision tools introduce new layers of regulation that may significantly influence how children engage with digital media and how autonomous they can become within these environments.

This study examines the relationship between parental regulation practices and children's digital competencies within the Alpha Generation. Rather than relying solely on age-based generational categorization, the research proposes an internal segmentation of Alpha Generation children based on varying levels and dimensions of digital competence. By doing so,

it addresses a recurring limitation in existing research, where children within the same generation are often treated as a homogeneous group, despite notable differences in skills, practices, and attitudes toward digital media.

The theoretical framework integrates three complementary perspectives. First, the study adopts a multidimensional understanding of digital competence, conceptualized as a combination of information and data literacy, communication and collaboration skills, digital content creation, safety awareness, and problem-solving abilities. This approach allows for a structured and comparative assessment of children's digital skills beyond basic access and usage. Second, the research draws on a motivational perspective that emphasizes children's active role in media use, focusing on the informational, social, and entertainment-related needs that guide their engagement with digital platforms. Third, an acceptance-oriented perspective is employed to explore how children perceive digital technologies in terms of usefulness, ease of use, and experiential engagement, while also considering age-specific factors such as playfulness and exploratory behavior.

Empirically, the study is based on qualitative data collected through focus group discussions with children aged 10–14 across seven cities in Transylvania, Romania, involving approximately 20–30 participants per location. The discussions focus on everyday digital practices, communication preferences, experiences with parental regulation and perceptions of digital autonomy. In addition, a qualitative content analysis of widely used digital supervision tools is conducted to examine how these technologies conceptualize safety, control, and the development of digital competence.

The study contributes to audience and reception research on children's digital media use by deifining competence-based segmentation. The findings aim to enrich academic discussions on generational diversity within the Alpha Generation and to support practical considerations related to digital education, parental mediation strategies, and the evolving role of children as active participants in digital culture.

CYM07 Mediated Childhoods in the Context of the Home

PP 0376 Guiding or guarding adolescents' screen use? A narrative review of the relationship between screen-use measures in the home context and adolescents' well-being

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Adolescents' screen use has increased substantially, while their well-being has declined. These parallel trends have raised concerns among caregivers, creating a growing demand for evidence-based measures to guide adolescents' screen use. This demand is reflected in newly introduced national guidelines on healthy screen use in the Netherlands, Sweden, and Australia, which recommend, for example, that caregivers limit adolescents' daily screen time.

Studies suggest that screen-use measures can indirectly improve well-being by affecting the quantity (i.e., time) or quality (i.e., type) of screen use. In these studies, it is often assumed that reducing screen time or changing the type of content adolescents are exposed to is beneficial to their well-being. However, changing screen use, particularly reducing screen time or access to specific platforms, can also be detrimental to adolescents' well-being, as it may negate any positive effects of screen use on adolescents' well-being (as demonstrated in previous media effects research). Moreover, beyond indirect effects, screen-use measures may also have direct effects on well-being. For example, general parenting research has shown that authoritative parenting styles and autonomy support positively influence adolescents' well-being. These insights may also extend to digital parenting.

A comprehensive understanding of how different screen-use measures in the home context, both indirectly (via screen use) and directly relate to adolescents' physical, social, and mental well-being, is still lacking. Moreover, little is known about how these relationships vary by individual and contextual factors. To address these gaps, the aim of this narrative literature review with systematic approach is two-fold. First, we synthesize empirical findings on the relationship between screen-use measures in the home context and adolescents' well-being. Second, we explore how individual and contextual factors influence this relationship.

Method

Following PRISMA guidelines, a systematic search was conducted on 29 July 2025 in Web of Science, Scopus, PsycINFO, and ERIC. The search included English- or Dutch studies published between 2015 and 2025. Eligible studies were peer-reviewed, empirical, focused on adolescents with a mean age between 12 and 18, examined any type of screen use measure and well-being outcome, and were conducted in the home context. After deduplication, 1,027 studies were initially screened, with 456 remaining after title-abstract screening. Full-text screening is currently being conducted.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary results indicate that the literature is dominated by research on parental mediation, particularly restrictive mediation (e.g., rules, limits) and active mediation (e.g., discussions about screen use). Co-use strategies (i.e., adolescents and caregivers using screens together), whole-family approaches (i.e., both adolescents and caregivers adopt screen-use measures), and child-initiated measures (i.e., children initiate measures or mediate parental screen use) are far less studied. Commonly assessed outcomes relate, for example, to sleep (physical well-being), depression and anxiety (mental well-being), and cyberbullying (social well-being). Initial findings also suggest considerable variability when it comes to

adolescents (e.g., age, gender) and home contexts (e.g., parenting styles, parental screen use), although individual and contextual factors are rarely examined systematically. In the presentation, we will delve deeper into the findings of this literature review and its theoretical and practical implications.

CYM08 Media Literacy Under Pressure: Children's Needs, Educational Constraints and Policy Gaps in Deeply Mediatized Societies

PN 37 Young people's (but not only!) audience literacies within the social media literacies framework

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We propose the development of a theoretical concept, "audience literacies," where both being aware of the different audiences of one's messages and regulating oneself as a member of various audiences entails crucial skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes. In our opinion, people as audiences deserve a thorough exploration to understand how messages are being en/decoded, or when people apply civil inattention and look away, pretending not to listen, or ignoring as a social norm of respect. We rely on several of our studies that allow us to take a new, recontextualizing look at young audiences. The data comes from interviews (n = 10) and focus groups (n = 36) with young audiences' perceptions of social norms on different social media platforms, focus groups with digital activists and leaders of civil society organizations (n = 13), moderators and audiences of public shaming sites (Murumaa-Mengel and Muuli 2021), microinterventions carried out in disinformation and incivility-heavy social media spaces by 28 students (Klaassen et al. 2024), and students' five-day-long digital disconnection diaries from 2016–2024 that explore, among other themes, various modes of participation and audiencing. By combining studies from various perspectives, we can propose an empirically supported framework for audience types and their associated social media literacies. The typology moves from more passive modes of participation and "being an audience" (Invisible Audiences) to more active practices of audiencing (Resilient Reactors and Activist Produsers). Furthermore, after identifying a lack of algorithmic literacies in younger age groups, we carried out a pracademic intervention – the TikTok House, which we view as one of the creative, playful solutions to gaps in media education. Described as invisible mechanisms that influence internet users' perception of reality (Cotter et al., 2022), algorithms have a profound impact. The rise of personalized platforms like TikTok has highlighted the need for algorithmic literacy, understanding how these often opaque, "black box" systems (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Neubaum, 2023) influence social media consumption and decision-making – especially among younger generations (Head et al., 2020; Henderson et al., 2020). To spotlight these algorithmic mechanisms shaping our information spaces, we created the physical TikTok House. Despite its potentially abstract name, the TikTok House was a uniquely designed intervention blending media education, vibrant aesthetics, and easily digestible information within a physical space. We set up a thematically decorated (LED lights, a mirror designed as the For You Page, scattered with various objects from current trends, etc.) small glass house at the centre of the city, aiming to bring a familiar digital space to physical life. In the TikTok House, visitors could quickly learn about the TikTok algorithm, how it works, and which data it collects. Additionally, it provided guidance on how to nudge and take control of what appears on one's homepage – For You Page. We wanted the space to attract younger generations and offer interactivity with the mirror as a central object, but from our observations can claim that such spaces facilitate intergenerational dialogue and informal knowledge sharing.

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PN 38 Between emotional exposure and curriculum overload: Teachers' perspectives on children's news engagement and digital well-being

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This study explores the multifaceted reasons influencing how Portuguese students (ages 6–13) engage with news and digital media, leveraging the Digital Well-being (DWB) ethical framework, which refers to the impact of digital technologies on achieving a life that is good for a human being (Bur et al., 2020). Based on nine in-depth interviews with teachers (Mensonides et al., 2024), we argue that children's relationship with news is highly variable, dictated fundamentally by socio-cultural contexts and emotional resonance, resulting in an increasing inability to exercise critical reading over information consumed online. Addressing this pervasive gap requires urgent pedagogical responses to integrate Media and Information Literacy (MIL) effectively into the educational experience (Aguaded et al., 2025). The omnipresence of digital media in children's lives necessitates integrating MIL to equip them with the critical skills required to navigate benefits (e.g., information access), challenges (with the emergence of AI tools) and harms (e.g., disinformation, emotional stress). Teachers identify a critical tension stemming from the structural environment, consistently describing the official curriculum as "overloaded". This inflexibility leaves "very little time" to cultivate among children spontaneous discussion of civic life, severely restricting the formal environment's ability to challenge the risks of passive, unchecked information consumption. This qualitative study draws on nine semi-structured interviews conducted with experienced educators from the 1st, 2nd,

and 3rd cycles of education in Portugal. The primary research focus was to capture teachers' perspectives on the intersecting influences of students' background, specific digital practices, and the factors that motivate or erode their informed engagement with current affairs. Findings reveal that the family's socio-cultural environment strongly dictates news involvement, demonstrating that critical discussion is fostered where parents actively accompany and explain information (Seddighi et al, 2022). The presence of foreign students (namely, Brazilians) acts as a powerful catalyst for citizenship dialogue, often spontaneously introducing complex political themes (such as comparisons between local far-right parties and figures like Lula or Bolsonaro), necessitating the use of empathy tests to address prejudice. However, youth engagement with media is overwhelmingly directed towards entertainment via digital platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, contributing to "fast news" consumption. Teachers report that this results in students frequently failing to "compare" sources and readily accepting unverified online content as "reality". The reliance on generative tools like ChatGPT further compounds this challenge by encouraging students to copy information without checking its correctness. Crucially, teachers note that emotional drivers resulting from global conflicts (e.g., war news) often provoke spontaneous dialogue but also cause emotional stress and anxiety in students. Given persistent societal and emotional pressures on youth in the unpredictable technological landscape, education must move beyond rigid curriculum to integrate DWB and MIL (Aguaded et al., 2025; Bur et al., 2020). Pedagogical models must prioritise critical autonomy and socially distributed knowledge through informal learning and the cultivation of relational habitus (Underwood et al., 2013). This prepares citizens for ethical democratic participation and responsible self-management within the complex digital ecosystem, enabling them to become empowered and resilient citizens.

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PN 39 Barriers of media literacy education: Teacher's media habitus

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In Austria media literacy education at school was introduced by a media education decree in 2001 (actual version: BMBWF, 2022). It says that media literacy must be addressed from classes 1 to 12 in all subjects. However, in practice, it depends on the commitment of single teachers whether and how this is realized. Some offer various ways to support media literacy, while others tend to ignore it. We were interested in teacher's perspectives and the reasons for integrating or not integrating media literacy education in their lessons. We addressed this from the perspective of media repertoires (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017) and media habitus (Kommer, 2014), and conducted a quantitative survey (N = 174) and semi-structured interviews (N = 14) with elementary and primary school teachers. Our research questions focused on teacher's private media use (media repertoires, media habitus) (RQ1), on their motivation to deal with digital media in class (RQ 2), and on their pedagogical knowledge regarding digital media and media literacy education according to the TPACK-model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) (RQ 3).Our findings show that although teachers' media repertoires and media habitus included a variety of digital media, analogue or at least screenless media activities were valued more. The older teachers were, the more were non-digital media valued over digital media. In this regard, particularly interviews with younger teachers revealed conflicts between teachers' private media habits and their professional media habitus. Survey data also showed an impact of teachers' private media repertoires on their motivation to include digital media and media literacy education class. Often, teachers' professional media habitus opposed the media habits and experiences of toddlers and school children. In the interviews older and younger teachers showed negative attitudes against children's experiences with digital media, when they appeared as part of their play or interaction with others. In the quantitative data set, we also found a correlation between teachers' pedagogical knowledge regarding media literacy education (TPACK), and their motivation to integrate digital media in educational settings. However, only part of the teachers claimed for more training in media literacy education. This was again more often mentioned by younger than by older teachers. In our presentation we will explain and discuss our findings more in depth. Based on this, we will propose recommendations how teachers' motivation could be encouraged across all ages in order to pave the way for a better integration of digital media and children's media experiences in elementary and primary education, as well as the support of media literacy and digital competencies in early formal education.

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PN 40 Advancing kindergarteners' digital media and information literacies via creative, playful approaches

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Extensive screen media experiences begin often in toddler years, as contemporary technologies allow very young children to be independent, active media users. It is crucial for children to be aware of the basic principles of (digital) media and social media logic (van Dijk & Poell, 2013), and constantly update necessary media and digital literacies. Children learn

through play, a term that encompasses both the Vygotskyan sense of imaginative acts and the more physical sense of engaging with a toy or game. Research confirms that children often make sense of media through interaction with others (Pfaff-Rüdiger & Riesmeyer, 2016), engaging in a fluid process where digital content is recreated also outside digital play, spanning imaginative, role, and outdoor activities (Arnott et al., 2020; Potter & Cowan, 2020). Methodologically, we use the action research framework (Sagor, 2010, Nazari, 2022), trying to simultaneously study and solve a problem. We started with a general research question: "How to advance the youngest age group's digital media and information literacies in a way that acknowledges their developmental preferences"? Then we collaborated with our students, enrolled in various media education courses. In that way, we hope the new generation of alumni will have a mindset of MIL collaborators, "serving as translators between the research community and the practitioners" (Powell et al, 2018).For three years now, we have carried out a playful event called DigiRapid for kindergarteners. The format follows so so-called internet safety drills- rapid learning sessions where groups of participating kids with their accompanying teachers transition to a new learning station every ten minutes. Learning stations are essentially play hubs where instructor(s) explain the short format game and then play as a group. The event takes place in springtime at the city park, with 50 students carrying out the activities and 200–300 children (mostly 6–7yos) participating with their teachers. To give an example of one 10-minute game: participate in a musical chairs type of dance game where when the music stops, children "freeze" and listen to a statement, such as "I ask my parents for permission before playing a new game" or "I click on an advertisement that promises free rewards." The children then must decide whether this action is reasonable or not. To do this, they run towards the play instructor holding yes/no signs. Then the instructor initiates a discussion with their group about why they made such choices. Guiding principle is to really listen to childrens' reasonings and their media worlds, let them interact amongst themselves and intervene with advice for safer choices if necessary. Physical play was central to our intervention because learning through play is recognized in pedagogy as meaningful, joyful and engaging in interaction-based holistic learning outcomes (Parker et al., 2022). Well-designed games do more than teach; they function like small focus groups, where children open up and share their experiences more effectively than they would through interviews or direct questioning (Parsanoglou et al., 2022). This feedback is valuable for educators (Hietajärvi & Maksniemi, 2017), providing authentic insights into children's online behaviors.

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PN 41 Fostering inclusive digital- and media literacy education: Policies for culturally diverse societies

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To support children in the development of the necessary skills, attitudes, and knowledge to participate safely and critically in digital environments, digital literacy education is rapidly becoming a part of the school curriculum. In the Netherlands, where this research is conducted, digital literacy will be formally embedded in primary and secondary education through attainment goals by 2027. Yet, while these policies aim to strengthen digital- and media literacies and promote digital inclusion, policymakers struggle to identify the necessary forms of support needed for students from different social and cultural backgrounds (Rožukalne et al., 2023). This is especially relevant as research shows that digital literacy development is shaped by intersecting socio-cultural factors (Goedhart et al., 2019). Yet, there is only limited research on how media education policies address digital inequalities related to socio-cultural factors. To address this gap, this project is organized around two key components. First, we conducted an intersectionality-informed thematic analysis of 48 Dutch policy documents on digital inclusion across six themes: education, public services, specific target groups, healthcare, public values, and key societal actors. The results from this study show that while the current policies include a wide range of target groups, their differing needs and the ways to address these needs remain unclear. In addition, current policies largely overlook socio-cultural dimensions of digital literacy development and digital inclusion. Building on these findings, this contribution focuses on the context of education as a critical site of change towards a more equal digital society. In the second part of this project, we aim to understand how educational policies aimed at digital- and media literacies are translated into everyday teaching practices and negotiate aspects of cultural diversity and inclusion in the classroom by conducting twenty interviews with teachers and educational and policy experts. The presentation highlights the gaps between policy intentions and everyday educational practices, identifying key barriers for implementation and inclusive digital- and media literacy education in the process. In addition, we present a framework to understand the role of policy in digital and media literacy education from an intersectional perspective of digital inclusion. Building on these findings, we argue for a lived experience approach to policy making, accounting for the situated needs of different populations to be meaningfully included in a digital society. Finally, we propose concrete recommendations for both policy makers to develop more inclusive policies and initiatives for digitally disadvantaged groups and for teachers to foster inclusive educational practices that consider socio-cultural contexts and the needs of varying target groups.

CYM09 Critical Perspectives on Youth and Generative AI

PP 0591 AI-driven youth cultures: Rethinking media literacy through algorithmic feel, platform practices, and critical digital competence

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This article examines how expanding access to artificial intelligence tools and the rise of AI-mediated youth cultures demand a reconceptualisation of media literacy grounded in communication sciences. As generative AI, recommendation engines, and predictive analytics increasingly structure young people's media practices, traditional literacy models—focused on information evaluation or functional skills—are insufficient for addressing the complexity of algorithmically mediated communication. Drawing on Minna Ruckenstein's concept of the **"feel of algorithms"** (2024), the article argues that young users develop experiential, affective, and embodied ways of sensing AI systems that coexist with, and sometimes contradict, formal media literacy objectives. This framework is situated within broader theoretical contributions from Buckingham (media education), Livingstone (children and digital media), Potter (media literacy), and van Dijck (platform society).

Three strands of scholarship guide the analysis:

1. **Communication sciences and audience theory**, emphasising processes of mediation and meaning-making in digital environments (Couldry & Hepp, 2017).
2. **Media literacy and digital competence research**, identifying gaps in current frameworks regarding algorithmic and AI systems (Buckingham, 2020; Frau-Meigs et al., 2017).
3. **Emerging AI literacy and youth culture studies**, including Ruckenstein's exploration of algorithmic sensibilities (2024), research on adolescents' creative and playful appropriations of AI (Swist & Collin, 2023), and analyses of platform governance and automated decision-making (Noble, 2018; O'Neil, 2016).

Together, these perspectives show that youth AI practices are deeply embedded in identity work, peer cultures, and affective engagements with digital platforms.

Methodology

The study employs a **mixed-method design**:

1. **Digital ethnography** of youth interactions with AI-integrated platforms (TikTok, Instagram Reels, Snapchat's AI lenses, generative chat and image tools).
2. **Semi-structured interviews** with adolescents (12–18) exploring their interpretations, emotional responses, and trust relationships with algorithms.
3. **Critical discourse analysis** of platform interfaces and AI features to understand how technical design shapes user agency, visibility, and literacy demands.

This triangulation captures both the cognitive and affective dimensions of how young people "feel" and navigate algorithmic systems.

Argument and Contribution

The article argues that contemporary media literacy must incorporate **algorithmic awareness**, **AI literacy**, and **affective–experiential dimensions** of youth–technology interaction. Young audiences increasingly rely on AI for creativity, identity formation, and social communication, yet often lack structural understanding of data extraction, generative biases, and platform governance. By foregrounding the "feel of algorithms" and the lived realities of AI-driven youth cultures, the article proposes a renewed media literacy framework integrating critical interpretation, ethical participation, experiential awareness, and systemic understanding. The framework offers actionable insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to empower young people's agency, creativity, and safety in an AI-mediated communicative landscape.

Keywords

Media literacy; youth cultures; artificial intelligence; algorithmic awareness; digital ethnography; communication sciences; generative AI; platform studies; critical data literacy; affective engagement

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CYM09 Critical Perspectives on Youth and Generative AI

PP 0592 Generative AI and affective labour among young adults with migrant backgrounds outside work and education

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In increasingly digitalised societies, artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI (GenAI) in particular, play a growing role in structuring everyday practices, from information seeking to emotional and social navigation. While much scholarship frames GenAI as an empowering tool, emphasising issues of literacy and skills (Sabherwal & Grover, 2024), other research suggests that its use may also have negative implications for well-being (Hashem et al., 2025). Young adults in NEET situations (not in education, employment, or training), who often face intersecting challenges such as low completion rates of secondary education, socioeconomic disadvantage, and weak institutional and social support, are particularly vulnerable (Fyhn et al., 2021). Building on research on socio-digital inequalities, which demonstrates that digital outcomes are shaped not only by technical skills but also by access to supportive social relations and by the capacity to interpret (Schellewald, 2022), negotiate, and navigate algorithmic systems (Helsper, 2021; Livingstone, 2025), this paper illuminates how such inequalities may be reproduced through everyday uses of GenAI. This study explores how young adults with migrant backgrounds in NEET situations engage with GenAI in their everyday lives, focusing on how such use can be understood as a form of *affective labour*.

Drawing on science and technology studies, particularly Susan Leigh Star's work on invisible work and marginality, the paper illuminates GenAI use as embedded in everyday forms of affective labour, coping with isolation, and managing uncertainty in precarious life situations. Rather than focusing on access or skills alone, drawing on qualitative interviews with 25 young people aged 16–29 in Neet situations, this paper highlights how inequalities rooted in non-supportive social ties are reproduced through everyday GenAI practices of coping, care, and emotional regulation.

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CYM09 Critical Perspectives on Youth and Generative AI

PP 0593 "I just started writing – there's not much to learn": Prompting skills and critical GenAI literacy among European adolescents

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Increasingly, young people in Europe are integrating Generative AI tools and companions (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, My AI, and Character AI) into everyday learning and leisure practices (Vodafone Foundation, 2025). Hence, it is essential to explore not only young people's functional skills, but also broader set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes – including critical and ethical considerations – as key competences for navigating digital life. Conceptually, this requires clarifying what constitutes AI literacy and its relevance for research. Building on ITU (2018) and recent research (Losh, 2024; Smahel et al., 2024), AI literacy can be defined as the ability to use AI tools to achieve beneficial outcomes while minimising harms. Usage of AI encompasses two main modes of engagement: (1) deliberate use of AI tools and (2) responses to AI decision-making, such as predictive systems like recommender algorithms and algorithmic media (Narayanan & Kapoor, 2024). Each demands distinct yet overlapping set of skills, knowledge, and critical awareness. Developing such literacy involves understanding visible features (e.g., prompt design, conversational interfaces) and hidden mechanisms (e.g., algorithmic moderation, personalisation engines) that shape users' experiences and choices, enabling them to meaningfully exercise their right to informed participation. This study explores adolescents' (aged 13–17) AI literacy and their awareness of structural dynamics underlying AI technologies. We focus on functional and critical dimensions – from prompt formulation to understanding operational logic, business models, ideological bias, and ethics – and analyse how these aspects are perceived and interpreted. Drawing on semi-structured interviews (N = 156) in nine European countries (Austria, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, and the United Kingdom), we explore how adolescents learn about AI-related benefits and risks, how this awareness shapes attitudes toward generative AI and its impact, and their views on remedies, policies, and regulation. Findings reveal that while young people claim to have good functional skills and generally feel confident in their AI-related abilities, their awareness of deeper structural and ethical aspects – such as operational principles, ownership structures, and bias – remains limited. Some expressed uncertainty when discussing these topics; as one 16-year-old from Estonia remarked, "I just started writing – there's not much to learn." Few participants perceived gaps in knowledge or expressed interest in further development. Although most could identify at least one AI-related risk, this was largely confined to privacy concerns, fear of being accused of cheating because of using AI for homework, and hallucination. Understanding of bias, data governance, co-creation, copyright, or ethical principles was rare, and few also raised environmental concerns about the impact of AI or addressed limits or biases in diversity and cultural representation. These results raise concerns for equity, inclusion, and age-appropriate design of AI tools. We propose an AI literacy model that incorporates a critical disposition as central to AI literacy – combining functional skills with awareness of AI's social and structural dimensions, on the grounds that understanding young people's experiences and perspectives is a vital starting point for designing media education policy.

CYM09 Critical Perspectives on Youth and Generative AI

PP 0594 Emotional responses and critical autonomy towards generative artificial intelligence: An ethnographic study on beliefs, emotions and text production among secondary school students

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The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in youth communicative environments represents a paradigm shift that demands well-founded educational responses. Secondary school students access these tools mediated by a set of informally acquired beliefs (regarding their accuracy, neutrality, reliability or potential threat) that trigger significant emotional responses such as distrust, enthusiasm or frustration. These emotional dispositions, shaped outside formal schooling, condition students' capacity to employ GAI critically and productively in academic tasks. This paper presents the findings of an ethnographic study examining the relationship between beliefs, emotional responses and competence in using GAI for argumentative text production among a group of 22 upper secondary students (aged 14–16).The theoretical framework integrates three complementary perspectives. First, the literature on AI literacy, which distinguishes between

technical knowledge about these tools and the competence to employ them in contextually appropriate ways. Second, theories of emotional cognition in technology adoption, which conceptualise trust as a multidimensional construct comprising cognitive, affective and behavioural components. Third, and most centrally, a critical pedagogical approach grounded in Paulo Freire and Gert Biesta. Drawing on Freire, we assume that education must be oriented towards the emancipation of the subject, overcoming 'banking education' that deposits content without problematising the conditions of knowledge production. Uncritical interaction with GAI would reproduce this depositary logic, whereas critical pedagogy must enable students to interrogate both the tools and their own dispositions towards them. From Biesta, we incorporate the distinction between qualification, socialisation and subjectification as dimensions of educational action, emphasising the latter: the goal is not merely for students to use GAI competently, but for them to constitute themselves as autonomous subjects capable of positioning themselves critically in relation to it. The methodological design adopts an ethnographic approach that privileges understanding the meanings participants attribute to their experience with GAI. Data collection employed four triangulated techniques: analysis of argumentative textual productions created with GAI interaction, revealing usage patterns and integration strategies; focus group discussions exploring the collective construction of beliefs within peer contexts; structured questionnaires on emotional dispositions and technological beliefs; and life history journals where students narrate their trajectory of interaction with GAI tools, critical moments and transformations experienced. This latter instrument proves particularly coherent with the Freirean approach by positioning the student as narrator of their own experience. Findings indicate that beliefs about GAI shape emotional dispositions that operate as either facilitators or inhibitors of critical competence. The educational intervention accompanying the study, guided by critical pedagogy principles, demonstrates how explicit work on these beliefs and emotions enables the development of what we term 'critical autonomy': students' capacity to employ GAI as a tool serving their own argumentative voice, without subordination or unreflective rejection. This research contributes to ECREA 2026's theme 'Shifting Grounds' by examining how GAI is reconfiguring youth communicative landscapes and by proposing educational responses that transcend mere technical literacy, committed to forming subjects capable of critically inhabiting new technological environments.

CYM09 Critical Perspectives on Youth and Generative AI

PP 0595 Designing Inequalities: Generative AI and the remaking of children's worlds

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Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) represents a new phase in the platformisation of childhood, extending algorithmic mediation across children's media ecologies. As GenAI tools become embedded in educational platforms, social media, creative practices, and domestic spaces, they reshape how children communicate, learn, play, and form relationships (Atabey et al., 2025). However, the rapid diffusion of these technologies has outpaced the development of governance frameworks that adequately address children's rights, experiences, and media practices (UNICEF, 2025; UNESCO, 2024). Existing AI regulation remains largely adult-centred and informed by Global North perspectives, offering limited insight into how children in the Global South encounter and negotiate the uneven consequences of platformised media environments (Stoilova et al., 2025).

Drawing on qualitative research with 84 children aged 13–18 in Brazil, India, Kenya, Thailand, and the UK, this paper examines how GenAI mediates children's everyday media practices and identity work. It asks: how do children make sense of and appropriate GenAI within their social and communicative worlds, and in what ways do digital infrastructures reproduce or challenge existing social and cultural inequalities?

Children's accounts highlight how GenAI use is shaped by the logics of platform capitalism, datafication, and commercialisation. While participants used GenAI for schoolwork, creative production, and emotional expression, their engagements were constrained by unequal access to devices, connectivity, and subscription-based features. Moreover, the design of GenAI systems privileges English-language inputs and Western cultural frameworks, marginalising non-dominant languages, local knowledges, and cultural identities. Children, particularly in the Global South, were acutely aware of these exclusions, describing AI outputs as irrelevant, inaccurate, or erasing their lived realities.

The findings also point to the emergence of affective and relational attachments to GenAI tools, suggesting a deepening entanglement between children's sociality and automated media systems. Some participants described AI companions as more predictable, responsive, or understanding than human relationships, raising critical questions about the delegation of care, intimacy, and emotional labour to commercial platforms.

By situating children's engagements with GenAI within the political economy of media infrastructures, this paper argues that GenAI intensifies the datafication of childhood while obscuring structural inequalities across contexts. It concludes that media and communication research on childhood must foreground power, access, representation, and children's voices,

and calls for AI governance, design, and media education grounded in children's rights and epistemic justice (5Rights Foundation, 2025).

CYM10 Digital Families Across Borders: Relational, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts

PN 63 Parents' new normal? Examining coerced digital participation in Denmark's welfare state

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This paper analyzes how digital parenting—the integration of digital media into parents' everyday caregiving practices—is shaped by state institutions and care infrastructures rather than individual preference. It asks: How do state-mandated apps mediate parenting practices, and what are the consequences for parental agency and responsibility? Based on 47 in-depth interviews with 20 Danish parents conducted over one year, the study examines how interpersonal routines and institutional expectations intersect with the broader "infrastructuralization" of digital media in family life. The analysis emphasizes the importance of attending to mundane digital routines rather than focusing solely on high-profile cases such as sharenting or smart toys. Parents' experiences with Aula, Denmark's parent-school communication platform, illustrate how digital systems establish expectations of attentiveness, availability, and competent parenting. The platform's ubiquity shows how deeply digital technologies have become embedded in care infrastructures. Parental agency thus cannot be understood as a matter of personal choice alone; it develops through continual negotiation with digital systems integrated into the educational system and the welfare state. The study advances research on digital parenting and contributes to debates on what Barassi terms "coerced digital participation," in which engagement with digital systems becomes necessary to access essential services and sustain social relationships. The findings highlight the increasingly blurred line between voluntary and coerced digital practices. When digital platforms are required for basic caregiving—receiving school information, coordinating activities, or tracking deadlines—participation ceases to be optional. Institutional expectations and the deep integration of digital infrastructures restrict parental choice and raise questions about data privacy, consent, and the state's role in the datafication of childhood. These dynamics indicate that safeguarding children's privacy cannot rely on binary positions for or against digital technology, nor on choosing between private companies and public institutions to handle data. A more effective approach recognizes both the benefits and risks of datafication and the shared responsibilities of parents, institutions, and technology providers. Although the study focuses on Denmark, it offers insights relevant to other contexts where digital technologies have become foundational to public services and care relationships. The Danish case demonstrates that even within a welfare state with strong privacy protections, the datafication of childhood poses significant concerns for children's futures and for the evolving nature of care.

CYM10 Digital Families Across Borders: Relational, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts

PN 64 Streaming in European families: A shared family activity or an individual practice?

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Streaming platforms such as Netflix, YouTube or Spotify, are gaining significant traction worldwide, and are increasingly integrated into modern family lives. They are designed with certain functions and anticipated individual user behaviours in mind, yet families operate according to diverse needs and values. To examine how streaming platforms intersect with family practices, we explore the question: How and under what circumstances is streaming constructed as a shared family activity and/or an individual practice in European families? Our analysis is based on 279 interviews with children and youth, parents, and grandparents from 93 families from five European countries: Poland, Norway, Spain, Romania, and the UK. The interviews were conducted between autumn 2023 and spring 2025 and were part of a large European qualitative research project. Our analysis shows that many families value shared viewing and listening, attributing this practice for creating physical closeness, fostering bonding through shared tastes and emotions, providing material for conversation and activities, and integrating streaming into family rituals. This demonstrates continuity of cultural patterns even in a rapidly changing media environment–formerly expressed in collective gatherings around the radio or television, now reflected in attempts to transfer this practice into the realm of streaming. However, this process is marked by tensions and frictions. The extent to which streaming platforms afford streaming as a shared family or an individual practice depends on various factors. These factors include attributes that can be linked to family members such as differences and similarities amongst family members (in age, gender, tastes), as well as whether family streaming is considered a desired "quality" family activity. Furthermore, our analysis shows that despite far-reaching transformations in cultural values, genre preferences still partly reflect gendered patterns, especially among parent and grandparent generations. However, the micro-power traditionally exercised by fathers has diminished in favour of the decision-making influence of children and younger generations. Our study thus highlights how family cultural values and emotions shape streaming practices. Moreover, we raise the question of how streaming platforms—through their technological affordances and business features—shape streaming practices. By examining device features and the spaces in which they are used, we highlight the persistent role of materiality even in

an era of immaterial digital platforms. We demonstrate that certain hardware and shared physical spaces (like living rooms or cars) form part of family infrastructure, fostering togetherness and counteracting tendencies towards individualisation offered by personalised recommendations and modes of use. We note that the opposing logics of striving for shared family time and the logic of streaming platforms (which offer a multitude of options and tailoring to individual, not collective preferences) often pose a challenge for families, leading to disputes and quarrels. From this perspective, these conflicts and the strategies families develop to resolve them (for example, seeking compromises about what will be listened to or watched and when) may be seen as crucial for maintaining shared family practices.

CYM10 Digital Families Across Borders: Relational, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts

PN 65 Social relationships and digital transitions: How family ties restructure whatsapp (dis)engagement

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Relationships established with digital media are dynamic. People appropriate, leave, and come back to different media technologies throughout their life course (boyd, 2014; Madianou & Miller, 2013; Nguyen, 2023; Taipale et al., 2018). This study examines how social relationships—particularly family ties—act as a structuring force in digital (dis)engagement to WhatsApp, a hybrid between instant-messenger and social media platform that has become, in many cultures, a central element to the management of everyday life (Johns, Matamoros-Fernández, & Baulch, 2023).Specifically, I ask: (1) How do close ties, specifically those concerning family relationships, shape individuals' processes of use of, and disconnection from, WhatsApp? (2) What social obligations and expectations shape digital presence and absence in familial contexts?Methodologically, the research was conducted using a qualitative approach, integrating semi-structured interviews and focus groups to capture a broad range of perspectives on social media (dis)engagement. A total of 143 participants from different regions of Argentina were interviewed. Data analysis followed an abductive framework, iteratively refining theoretical insights by linking empirical observations with broader communication theories. Findings suggest family relationships play a substantial role in structuring social media use and disconnection, in general, and WhatsApp, in particular. In their discourses, participants display how caregiving responsibilities, family expectations, and social obligations shape their platform use. Others frame digital presence as a moral obligation to remain available for close family members. While digital disconnection may be perceived as an act of personal well-being, for some participants it entails consequences for others who depend on these platforms for communication. Social pressure attached to parental roles also play a role in digital use. At the same time, overwhelming feelings associated with family ties are a cause for disengaging from some WhatsApp functionalities, like groups, causing some irritation among family members. In some cases, care work seems to make digital presence unavoidable, leading to reusing WhatsApp. These findings underscore how digital (dis)engagement is relational, shaped not only by personal preferences or technological features, but also by caregiving structures and social dependencies highlight the relational nature of digital engagement and disengagement. While previous research emphasizes individual autonomy in digital disconnection (Ross et al., 2024) as well as the role played by the design of technology (Vanden Abeele, Halfmann, & Lee, 2022), this study seeks to make a contribution by underscoring how processes of technology use and disconnection are deeply embedded in social structures, as individuals must negotiate their withdrawal within broader networks of care and obligation—oftentimes associated with family ties. This study contributes to discussions on the role of digital platforms in mediating family relationships (Madianou & Miller, 2013), particularly in contexts where digital infrastructures become central to maintaining intergenerational ties. While digital platforms such as WhatsApp offer connection, convenience, and reachability, they also seem to impose relational expectations that complicate efforts at disengaging (Ling, 2012)—showing that family ties mediate the role of digital platforms in turn.

CYM10 Digital Families Across Borders: Relational, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts

PN 66 Parenting tween girls on roblox: Negotiating expectations, responsibilities and play

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Roblox has emerged as one of the most popular 'digital playgrounds' targeting children and tweens as core audiences. Often referred to as the 'YouTube of Games', there are over 150 million daily active users on Roblox, with roughly 40% being under the age of 13 (Roblox, 2025). In the aftermath of several investigations regarding child safety in the platform, including a highly mediatized report by Hindenburg Research (2024) that characterized it as a 'pedophilic hellscape.' In response Roblox invested in bettering their safety guidelines and features, as well as parental controls. However, it is unclear how parents experience these changes. This paper focuses on parents' expectations, challenges, and playful negotiations of their daughter's Roblox use within the family sphere. As part of a bigger study, we interviewed 14 parents and 17 tween daughters living in Toronto, Canada in the fall of 2025 which were later thematically analyzed. We aim to understand parents' perceptions and knowledge of Roblox, how the platform fits into their families' media routines, the challenges and the opportunities associated with the platform, as well as the issue of responsibility when it comes to supporting their daughter's safety and wellbeing. In our study most parents express a distrust of Roblox as a platform, due to negative

experiences of other families and portrayals of the platform on the news. To deal with this, parents employ diverse strategies, from the usage of Roblox's parental controls — which a few deem to be 'unsophisticated' — to ongoing conversations and negotiations around digital safety with their children. Many Participants further reported feelings of inadequacy regarding their digital parenting practices. Parents often felt the need to 'apologize' for their lack of knowledge on Roblox, with very few saying they had heard of the platform's own safety and family resources. Some parents also expressed they felt like they were 'aging out of what is relevant' which makes it hard for them to guide their children through digital experiences they consider 'foreign'. Nonetheless, the positive role of Roblox for play and socialization in their daughters' lives was a point of consensus among our participants as many of the girls played Roblox with friends, cousins, and siblings. Media use rules in the family sphere mostly revolve around limiting screen time and ensuring content is age-appropriate, with the latter being harder to reinforce, as parents report the existence of 'scary' and 'violent' games in the platform, even when parental controls are in place. Parents express the wish that Roblox offered better support for parents and prioritize the platform as a space for children to learn and express themselves creatively in a safe way. Overall, our results largely echo previous research on the pressures and responsibilities of digital parenting (Livingstone & Blum-Ross, 2020) with parents often feeling inadequate as 'role models' for their children. This highlights a relevant gap regarding Roblox's solutions — that responsibilize parents as the main agents for their children's safety — while parents' feel overwhelmed and struggle to take on such tasks.

CYM10 Digital Families Across Borders: Relational, Cultural, and Institutional Contexts

PN 67 From "shitty mom" to "super dad": (Re)framing gendered parenting scripts in Italian digital media

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In contemporary Italy, digital media have become central arenas for constructing, reinforcing, and contesting gendered parenting norms. While caregiving is often presented as a universal and biologically rooted responsibility, its enactment remains profoundly gendered: mothers are positioned as moral and epistemic guardians of the family, while fathers are portrayed as lacking but improvable. This paper examines how Italian digital platforms contribute to the (de)construction of these roles, drawing on interdisciplinary literature on digital parenting, media cultures, and gendered care. In line with recent scholarship, digital media are approached as spaces that accompany transitional moments and shape parental experiences and expectations. Italy offers a compelling case for investigation. Its familistic culture privileges maternal caregiving and informs institutional and everyday expectations of who performs emotional labour and assumes responsibility for children. Parenting scripts are understood here as culturally embedded narratives that delineate how caregiving roles are performed, evaluated, and legitimised. These scripts reproduce asymmetries in responsibility, yet they are not static: they are negotiated, reframed, and challenged through media discourses and interactions. Drawing on a long-term digital ethnography conducted in Italy since 2020, this paper analyses two contrasting but culturally interdependent platforms: the satirical feminist initiative Mammadimerda ("Shitty Mom") and the Super Papà ("Super Dad") app. These cases exemplify divergent strategies for reconfiguring parenting scripts. The study combines digital ethnography and critical discourse analysis, with particular attention to the subjects of enunciations and their epistemic and deontic authority. Findings indicate that Mammadimerda functions as a space for counter-hegemonic reflection, where the burdens of intensive motherhood are made visible and laughable. Through recurring devices, such as the psicoteramerda ("shitty psychotherapist") persona and the motto "be a penguin", the platform reframes maternal ambivalence as legitimate and socially structured rather than pathological. Analysis of Instagram threads shows how metaphors circulate as cognitive tools: followers appropriate them to narrate struggles, validating experiences of fatigue, frustration, or self-doubt. The platform's mix of satire and testimonials enables mothers to renegotiate expectations and imagine caregiving as shared rather than solitary. Super Papà, in contrast, positions fathers as involved but pedagogically guided actors. Its interface structures paternal participation through checklists and monitoring tasks, encouraging men to oversee maternal behaviour, bodies, health, and decision-making. Findings reveal that while fathers are invited to be present, they are positioned as supervisors rather than co-caregivers. Prompts around pregnancy, nutrition, and breastfeeding emphasize paternal responsibility for ensuring maternal compliance, framing fatherhood as management rather than embodied care. Taken together, the analysis shows that Italian digital parenting cultures do not simply disrupt established scripts but participate in rewriting them. Mammadimerda destabilizes the moralized figure of the "good mother", whereas Super Papà repackages paternal engagement through managerial logics. The study argues that digital platforms are pedagogical environments in which gendered expectations are simultaneously challenged and reproduced, revealing the ambivalence of change in contemporary family life.

CYM11 Young People Navigating Online Hate Speech and Disinformation

PP 0838 Spreading hate speech on social media as a cultural phenomenon among adolescents and young adults

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Introduction

Hate on social media is a cultural phenomenon that goes beyond individual behaviour. From a media studies perspective, this research delves into the reasons for exposure to social media content that attacks or discriminates against groups of people based on their identity traits. It examines the arguments used by young people to legitimise this type of content as a reaction to defend their identity or ideas, and how they trivialise and downplay the harm caused. They exonerate themselves by blaming the victim through mechanisms of moral disengagement and ideological alignment (Wachs et al., 2002; Ieracitano et al., 2024). This phenomenon would be consistent with Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), which addresses the legitimisation and justify hostility towards groups perceived as subordinate (Celuch et al, 2022). Finally, existing individual attitudes are analysed within the framework of cultural structures that validate hatred.

Methodology

Firstly, the research is based on a representative survey conducted in 2025 among 1,800 adolescents and young people aged 14–24 living in Spain. The aim was to determine the predictive factors that shape the spread of hate speech in which younger generations are growing up and its legitimisation. Secondly, and complementarily, a qualitative approach is adopted, grounded in the use of social listening software, which has enabled the automated monitoring of comments posted on social media. It has been possible to identify patterns of hate speech in participation in polarised digital communities and to detect clusters of interaction using centrality metrics. Ten LGBTI influencers are examined based on their discursive influence. Concurrently, a comprehensive examination of 20,000 comments was conducted, with a focus on the misogynistic discourse prevalent within the inceldom community.

Initial results

Of particular note is the frequency of exposure to hostile content directed against individuals based on their origin, nationality or ethnic group (35.3%, M = 3.01) and content directed against gender identity or sexual orientation (34.7%, M = 2.95). To a lesser extent, although not marginal, content related to functional diversity or neurodiversity (29.1%, M = 2.78). The justification of hatred in terms of defending ideals or one's own group is the main justification as a defence of the in-group, with a high average proportion of 42.3% (M = 3.08), above trivialisation (26.7%; M = 2.64) and victim blaming (20%, M = 2.36). In both cases, boys show higher gradients than girls, particularly in the 18–24 age group. Boys (aged 18–24) are the ones who trivialise this content the most, justifying it as a joke (35.8%, M = 3.01; girls 22.7%, M = 2.50), and who claim that the people who are the targets of hate are usually to blame (27.3%, M = 2.71; girls 17.5%, M = 2.20). These results present a problematic pattern in which boys show greater adherence to mechanisms of moral disengagement by trivialising the harm, disguising aggression as harmless humour and shifting responsibility onto the victim. Furthermore, while LGBTI influencers do not articulate narratives of identity empowerment, the incel community propagates misogynistic and male victimisation discourses as a cultural backlash against feminism, thereby reinforcing exclusionary ideals of hegemonic masculinity.

CYM11 Young People Navigating Online Hate Speech and Disinformation

PP 0839 The structural layer of hostility: A multimodal and intersectional mapping of youth-targeted polirasation and hate speech on TikTok, Instagram, and Youtube (2024)

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Problem Statement

Digital hate speech is no longer an isolated anomaly but has become a habitual discursive practice within social media ecosystems, particularly impacting young audiences. During adolescence, individuals are highly permeable to digital models as they seek references and consolidate their identities, making them vulnerable to hostile content that can deteriorate psychological well-being and translate into offline discriminatory practices.

Methodology

This proposal presents findings from the **CeMIYA project** (Countering Media Intolerance in Young Audiences), which analyzed a massive corpus of **22,123 posts** from TikTok (30.4%), Instagram (21.1%), and YouTube (49.5%) throughout 2024. The study utilized multimodal automated detection, transformer-based topic modeling, and hierarchical clustering to categorize eight types of hate: misogyny/gender, racism/xenophobia, LGBTQ+phobia, islamophobia, antisemitism, antigipsyism, lookism (*aspectismo*), and anticlimatism.

Key Findings

Prevalence and Platform Dynamics: Nearly half of the analyzed content (**44.24%**) contained hate or toxicity. **YouTube** emerged as the primary hub for hostility, concentrating 62.31% of hate posts and the highest levels of severe toxicity. Conversely, TikTok showed the lowest proportion (19.72%), suggesting that platform **affordances**—such as YouTube's long-form, argumentative nature versus TikTok's ephemeral micro-formats—mediate the intensity and sedimentation of hate.

The Misogyny Axis: Misogyny and gender-based hate act as the **structural backbone** of digital hostility across all platforms, being the most frequent category (e.g., appearing in 45.84% of hate posts on YouTube).

Platform-Specific Varieties: In **Instagram**, lookism (discrimination based on physical appearance) is a distinctive trait, appearing in 10.01% of posts and reflecting the platform's visual and performative logic.

Interaction and Engagement: Hate content functions as a powerful **interaction engine**. While neutral posts often receive more "likes," hate posts accumulate **56.88% of all comments**. In **TikTok**, hostile messages significantly drive conversation, generating double the average number of comments compared to neutral posts.

Intersectional Complexity: Intersectionality is a structural phenomenon rather than a marginal one; **38.4% of hostile content involves "multi-hate,"** combining multiple forms of discrimination. The most frequent pairing is **misogyny + racism/xenophobia**.

Conclusions

The results indicate that hate speech has been normalized as an **expressive resource** and a lever for visibility within the youth digital attention economy. The study underscores the urgent need for platform-specific prevention strategies designed through an **intersectional lens** to address the convergence of multiple axes of discrimination. To understand the presence of hate speech in the digital lives of youth, we can view social media platforms as different **urban soils** where young people grow their identities. In some soils (like YouTube), the ground is deep and allows for the thick, complex roots of "multi-hate" to take hold and persist over time. In others (like TikTok or Instagram), the soil is shallower and the growth is faster, leading to "weeds" of micro-aggressions and aesthetic judgments that spread rapidly and are easily normalized as part of the landscape. Addressing the problem requires more than just pulling individual weeds; it requires treating the soil itself—the very architecture and incentives of the digital environment.

CYM11 Young People Navigating Online Hate Speech and Disinformation

PP 0840 Understanding online hate speech through adolescents' voices. A multi-method qualitative study

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Hate speech on the internet has become an increasingly visible and socially disruptive phenomenon, particularly for adolescents who encounter digital communication spaces on a daily basis. As a public form of expression, hate speech articulates and reproduces notions of inequality directed at historically and structurally marginalized groups through intentional devaluation, exclusion, and contempt. It manifests in a wide range of forms, including racist, sexist, and other discriminatory expressions, and operates across different modes, ranging from explicit calls for violence to subtle practices such as generalizations, insinuations, and equivalences. Due to its dynamic development in digital environments and its violation of human dignity, hate speech poses a significant challenge to social cohesion and democratic culture. This challenge is especially relevant for educational contexts, where young people develop social orientations, values, and interpretive frameworks.

The present qualitative study contributes to educational and pedagogical debates on hate speech in schools by examining how adolescents perceive, interpret, and deal with hate speech in online contexts. The study focuses on young people aged 14 to 18 and investigates their everyday experiences, interpretive boundaries, and coping strategies in relation to online hate speech. A particular emphasis is placed on the role of schools as sites of prevention, awareness raising, and support from the perspective of the students themselves.

The study addresses four guiding research questions:

1. How do adolescents perceive hate speech online and what experiences have they had?
2. How do adolescents distinguish between expressions of opinion and hate speech, and where do they experience uncertainty in making these distinctions?
3. Which strategies do adolescents develop when confronted with hate speech, and which factors influence their willingness to act or intervene?
4. How do adolescents perceive the role of schools in preventing and addressing hate speech, and which forms of support do they consider helpful or desirable.

Methodologically, the study employs a multi-method qualitative design combining written reflections and group discussions. Data collection was conducted between November 2025 and March 2026 at different types of secondary schools in Vienna and Lower Austria in which more than 100 students participated in the study. The written reflection instrument

consists of an anonymous qualitative questionnaire consisting of an open-ended reflective text of approximately 200 to 250 words. Participants should articulate their thoughts, experiences, and expectations regarding hate speech, supported by optional guiding questions and sentence starters.

In addition, group discussions with open-ended prompts are conducted. These include an introductory phase focused on conceptual clarification, a discussion of concrete case examples using memes and screenshots, a reflection on personal experiences and action strategies, and a concluding phase addressing perceived needs and wishes.

By foregrounding the voices of young people, the study aims to generate empirically grounded insights into adolescents' understandings of hate speech and their expectations toward schools. First results are expected in early summer 2026. The findings are intended to inform educational practice and teacher education in lower and upper secondary education, with a particular focus on fostering critical reflection, awareness of discrimination, and professional, self-reflexive pedagogical action.

CYM11 Young People Navigating Online Hate Speech and Disinformation

PP 0841 TikTok and moral disengagement: A three-wave longitudinal study of hate speech exposure among adolescents

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Social media use is widespread among adolescents. They spend substantial amounts of time on these platforms, increasing the likelihood that the content they view influences their beliefs and behaviors. As hate speech proliferates on social media and algorithms increasingly personalize content to capture users' attention, adolescents are being targeted with progressively more extreme content. Prior research has linked exposure to hateful content to increased moral disengagement, which suggests that social media engagement may increase moral disengagement among adolescents, making them more desensitized to unethical behavior. However, there is a lack of longitudinal studies on this topic, leaving important questions unanswered regarding the temporal dynamics between social media use and adolescents' moral disengagement. In addition, it is important to explore the moderating effect of personal and contextual factors. Digital literacy has emerged as a promising tool to empower adolescents against the negative effects of social media, warranting empirical evidence. Accordingly, the current study analyzes the longitudinal associations between TikTok engagement and adolescents' moral disengagement, considering exposure to hate speech as a potential mediator and digital literacy as a moderator of the associations.

A three-wave longitudinal study with a one-month interval was conducted among 882 adolescents aged 16–18 years. Participants included 1,803 adolescents in wave 1 (51.5% boys, Mage = 16.70, SD = 0.70), 1,171 adolescents in wave 2 (52.3% boys, Mage = 16.71, SD = 0.70), and 1,065 adolescents in wave 3 (51.7% boys, Mage = 16.74, SD = .70). The final sample of the study was composed of 882 adolescents aged 16–18 (M = 16.69, SD = .66). Among them, 52.3% identified as men, 47.1% as women, 0.6% as non-binary, and 0.1% preferred not to answer.

An autoregressive cross-lagged panel model was conducted to analyze whether TikTok engagement prospectively predicted exposure to hate speech on TikTok, and whether this, in turn, predicted moral disengagement. The model showed a good fit of the data, $\chi2(25) = 29.74$, $p = .234$; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .015, 95% CI [.00, .032]; SRMR = .02; TLI = .99. Results showed that TikTok engagement was associated with increased exposure to hate speech at the one-month follow-up (wave 1 to wave 2; $\beta = .12$, $p < .001$), whereas this relationship reversed and became negative between wave 2 and wave 3 ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .001$). Notably, exposure to hate speech did not predict short-term changes in moral disengagement. Moreover, and contrary to expectations, digital literacy did not influence these short-term effects. Exploratory reciprocal analyses revealed that moral disengagement positively predicted TikTok engagement but showed no predictive effect on exposure to hate speech.

Therefore, in contrast to previous literature, this study found that although adolescents more engaged with TikTok were initially exposed to more hate speech, this pattern changed over time. Moreover, exposure to hate speech on TikTok did not predict moral disengagement one month later. Overall, these results advance the longitudinal understanding of the dynamic interrelationships between social media engagement, hate speech exposure, and moral disengagement in adolescence.

CYM11 Young People Navigating Online Hate Speech and Disinformation

PP 0842 "Now we feel like those who spread disinformation": A mixed-method exploration of how Dutch youth create and react to disinformation

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Youth are among the most active users of social media, which offers social and emotional benefits such as peer support but also exposes them to harmful content, including disinformation, false or misleading information designed to deceive for ulterior motives (Popat & Tarrant, 2023). Dutch youth, in particular, often demonstrate media literacy skills below the

basic level necessary to critically assess information, making them vulnerable to both encountering and unintentionally spreading disinformation (Duvekot et al., 2024). Despite these risks, little is known about how youth actively experience disinformation. This paper thus presents a mixed-method investigation into how Dutch youth aged 16–21 *create* and *react to* disinformation, integrating qualitative and experimental approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of these processes. The paper, therefore, combines an inductive focus group study (Study I, *N* = 17) with an experimental survey (Study II, *N* = 692).

In Study I, participants took part in focus groups and were tasked with creating disinformation using a generative AI art tool. They subsequently reflected on the content they produced, their emotions during the task, and their perceptions of the created disinformation's potential impact. This qualitative approach allowed us to examine the defining characteristics of disinformation that youth encounter, as well as the social and emotional responses elicited during the process of creating it. On top of that, it allowed us to analyse the relevant disinformation *topics* they encounter.

In Study II, a within-subjects experiment, participants evaluated five peer-generated AI disinformation items derived from Study I. We explored the impact these images had on image evaluation (e.g., credibility), behaviour (e.g., sharing intentions), and third-person effect. Besides moderating effects of education level and media literacy, developmental differences were also explored by comparing late adolescents (16–18) with early adults (19–21). We furthermore included open-ended questions exploring participants' reasoning processes when assessing image authenticity (e.g., "You mentioned that you don't think this image looks real. How could you tell that?") and their self-reported verification strategies (e.g., "Which steps would you take to check whether something you see online is disinformation?").

Preliminary qualitative findings indicate striking age and education differences in terms of disinformation *creation* and *reactions*. For instance, disinformation created by lower educated and younger youths covered topics like football and advertisement, whereas older and higher educated adolescents created political disinformation. Furthermore, reacted lower educated participants less concerned during and after creating disinformation, finding it entertaining and fun. By combining qualitative insights from the creation process with quantitative data on reactions to the peer-generated content, this study, therefore, not only provides a detailed understanding of the mechanisms through which disinformation impacts youth.

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CYM12 Digital (Dis)Connection

PP 0948 "It's just second nature to do WhatsApp." Kinkeeping and boundary work by multi-generational families in the platform society

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Qualitative research with 65 three-generation families in four European countries explores whether "platformisation" is reshaping family life, focusing on WhatsApp as the most used messaging platform. Framed within domestication theory and social science theories of family life, the research asked: (1) How and why is WhatsApp used to meet family needs and sustain family relationships through communication, coordination, sharing and negotiation? (2) How and why are family members included or excluded from family systems or subsystems over time, using WhatsApp groups? The rationale for focusing on family dynamics across generations and countries is to explore whether diversity in long-established and highly motivated family practices reveals ways in which families counter, if not resist, the datafication and commodification strategies of powerful global platforms. The findings suggest, first, that family life is indeed platformised insofar as a data-driven business model, of which families show little critical awareness, increasingly provides the infrastructure for family communication. However, second, the findings do not reveal how the WhatsApp platform substantially shapes families' symbolic and material practices. Instead, the evident diversity in WhatsApp use by gender, generation, and country is better explained by reference to family dynamics – particularly their need to sustain meaningful relationships (kinkeeping) while limiting demands on their energy and emotions (family boundaries).

The paper raises questions about how platformisation may work differently for different types of platforms. Like most messaging services, WhatsApp is an atypical platform in that it is not (at least in Europe as yet) highly driven by the attention economy. It neither recommends contacts nor content, at least as generally used for chatting, nor provides the algorithmically personalised feed that is transforming other types of platforms (social media, streaming, gaming). Should it attempt this, the family interviews indicate this could be unsuccessful. In many families, the primary kinkeeper (often the middle-generation mother) undertakes considerable emotional labour to encourage her parents, as the oldest generation,

and her children, too, to join the intimate sphere of private family communication, often under careful conditions. To be recommended new contacts, perhaps the children of friends, or to be fed random content reels, would disrupt the intense communication of those families who, they told us, love and rely on WhatsApp as the very heart of family life. Likewise, the boundaries people navigate as they reshape the family WhatsApp group or groups in the face of divorce, death, or family conflicts are too hard-won to be interrupted by AI slop or subjected to demands to widen the network. We conclude by asking whether these findings point to the limits of platformisation. Or do they reflect the current moment, shaped by WhatsApp's business strategy to achieve market dominance, only for this to be reshaped and undermined soon, as WhatsApp and other messaging platforms incorporate profitable features of the attention economy?

CYM12 Digital (Dis)Connection

PP 0949 A biographical and multiperspective approach to understand the role of social relationships in the origin and development of problematic media use

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The growing relevance of digital media in the everyday lives of children and adolescents has led to increasing concern about problematic or pathological media use in this age group. Correspondingly, research indicates that adolescents and young adults in particular exhibit a higher prevalence of pathological media use (Stevens et al., 2021). Even though problematic media usage patterns in young people often do not appear to be stable, there is a small proportion of those affected for whom the problem persists over a longer period (Strittmatter et al., 2016). This raises the question of how problematic media use develops and under which conditions it persists over time. The scientific debate on this topic is largely dominated by psychological perspectives. However, these predominantly quantitative approaches tend to neglect the complexity of media appropriation processes, highlighting the need for qualitative empirical perspectives from communication and media studies.

Addressing this desideratum, the submitted dissertation project adopts a qualitative, biographical, and multiperspective approach with a particular focus on the role of social relationships. First, biographical interviews were conducted with individuals affected by problematic media use. The sample consists of sixteen participants who sought support from outpatient and inpatient services. The specific media-related issue (e.g., digital games or social media) was deliberately left open during recruitment in order to identify potentially different social motives. During the biographical interviews, participants reflected on their life courses and on significant relationships in their biographies using free network maps. Furthermore, eleven qualitative interviews with attachment figures of the affected persons (e.g., parents, siblings, or partners) were conducted to gain additional perspectives. These interviews focused on the views of individuals close to those affected regarding the development and experience of problematic media use and included visual representations (network maps) of the affected persons' social networks from the attachment figures' perspectives. Data collection took place mainly between May and September 2025.

All collected qualitative data (multiperspective interviews and network maps) will be analysed using Grounded Theory methodology following Corbin and Strauss (2015) to explore the role of social relationships in the context of problematic media use. The presentation will focus in particular on the interrelationship between social relations and the media-related practices of those affected during childhood and adolescence. In addition, it briefly reflects on the methodological potential of multiperspective interviews and network mapping for research on media appropriation.

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CYM12 Digital (Dis)Connection

PP 0950 Emotional gatekeepers: The critical role of parenting influencers in describing and teaching emotions

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This paper explores the growing influence of social media parenting figures on how parents understand and respond to their children's emotions. Parenting influencers leverage social media to build communities around relatable content and "sharenting" - sharing parenting experiences (Jorge et al., 2022). They often position themselves as experts, offering

advice that challenges traditional views and promotes "good parenting" practices focused on building positive parent-child relationships (Toader, 2023).

This study thus investigates the burgeoning influence of social media parenting figures and their role in shaping how modern parents understand, interpret, and respond to children's emotions. As traditional, community-based support models, often described by the "it takes a village" adage, give way to digital platforms, parenting influencers have emerged as central authorities. We use a thematic and critical discourse analysis of 100 Facebook posts from four prominent Romanian parenting influencers: Anca Zlăvog, Raluca Ștefan, Oana Moraru, and Urania Cremene. By applying Van Leeuwen's categories of legitimation, the study explores how these influencers authorize their advice through expert and role-model status while using rationalization to justify their parenting frameworks. A significant finding is the discursive shift regarding emotional deficiency. While traditional psychological literature views children as the primary subjects needing emotional socialization, Romanian influencers often portray parents as the ones lacking the necessary emotional vocabulary and self-regulation skills. Consequently, the influencers position themselves as "emotion mitigation experts" who must first educate the parent as an "emotional learner" before the parent can effectively model these skills for the child. The analysis further identifies a prevalence of negative emotions, particularly anger, anxiety, and sadness, within the discourse, reflecting the challenges parents are most eager to solve. Influencers utilize a blend of specialized psychological terminology (e.g., polyvagal theory, neuroception) and vivid figurative language, such as metaphors of "emotions as volcanoes" or "emotional cups", to make complex concepts relatable and actionable. While these influencers offer empowering tools for "resilience-oriented parenting", the study concludes that their promotional and sometimes oversimplified "recipe-based" advice can create a new form of dependency. By framing parenting as a professionalized endeavor, they may inadvertently invalidate parental intuition, making followers increasingly reliant on expert validation to navigate the complexities of child-rearing in a neoliberal risk society.

Keywords

emotional literacy, Romanian parenting influencers, sharenting, discursive legitimation

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CYM12 Digital (Dis)Connection

PP 0951 What is a good childhood in the digital era? The Smartphone Free Childhood movement in Sweden

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Recent initiatives aimed at restricting children's access to digital and social media across the globe, including Australia, the UK, the EU and the Nordics, for example, raise critical questions about the socio-cultural constructions of childhood. These regulatory interventions have direct impact on children's lived experiences and their capacity to exercise rights within digital environments, including participation in public life, access to information, and their rights to culture, leisure and play. The international research network EU Kids Online (EUKO) has issued a statement cautioning prohibitive measures on social media access risk undermining these rights. Alongside these policy developments, techno-sceptical parental movements are emerging as influential actors within contemporary public discourse.

Situated within this context of increased regulation of children's access to online environments (e.g., age-specific national recommendations on screen use, school phone bans, curtailment of social media access for younger adolescents) and the ongoing digital backlash defined by Albris et al (2024) as encompassing diverse practices of digital disconnection alongside critiques of technological and platform-mediated life, this paper examines the discursive dynamics and epistemic controversies shaping contested notions of a 'good childhood' in contemporary digital culture. It focuses on the emergence of normative frameworks that equate childhood well-being with minimal exposure to digital media, as promoted by parental advocacy groups across Europe. The European parental movement originates in the UK-based Smartphone Free Childhood initiative established in 2024, currently exceeding 350,000 members, and maintaining affiliations with analogous movements across many countries. The campaign employs affective and normative appeals through slogans such as *'Childhood's too short to scroll away'.*

The paper centres on the case of the corresponding Swedish advocacy organisation Ki-DS and their campaign *Föräldrapakten* [The Parents' Pact], which promotes restrictions on children's engagement with digital technologies. The initiative mobilises parents through rhetorical and visual strategies designed to foster mutual support in delaying children's access to smartphones and social media, while simultaneously engaging in lobbying and media campaigning aimed at reconfiguring conceptions of childhood in the digital age. These efforts reflect a broader shift in Swedish social norms and illuminate tensions between competing paradigms of risk and harm, benefits and digital rights. Employing critical discourse

and visual analysis of Swedish news media reporting on the parental movement as well as the organisation's social media campaign output, the paper examines how the rhetoric of parental backlash movements not only produces new parenting norms but also reproduces socially stratified imaginaries of what constitutes a good childhood within contemporary digital culture. Understanding the drivers of digital backlash is particularly important in a Swedish context, where the state assumes a significant role in the collective upbringing and education of children. The paper further considers the implications of these dynamics for children's self-perceptions of digital media practices as increasingly framed through negative associations and how such discourses shape their capacity to exercise digital rights. Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing debates on digital parenting, media regulation, children's rights in digital environments, and the cultural politics of childhood.

CYM13 Understanding (Digitally) Mediated Childhoods

PP 1046 Tensions between digital imperatives and digital needs among young people

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The paper examines how young people negotiate the imperatives of digitalised and deeply mediatised societies and how these socio-structural demands are translated into "digital needs" and everyday practices. Building on the concept of deep mediatization, we understand digital media not as an external layer of social life but as infrastructural conditions of participation, learning, work, and relationships. These conditions generate structural pressures – such as constant connectivity, availability, responsiveness, and technological competence – that are often experienced as self-evident rather than explicitly articulated. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, we conceptualise digital imperatives as internalized normative expectations that condition what counts as being a competent, responsible, and included subject in contemporary society. In contrast, digital needs are approached as practical responses and negotiation strategies through which youth seek to maintain autonomy, belonging, and well–being within these conditions. By focusing on this relationship, the paper asks how young people experience these imperatives in everyday life, what tensions emerge from them, and how these tensions are expressed through young people's digital needs and practices.

Empirically, the study is based on in–depth group interviews conducted in 2024 in Slovenia within the Digital Maturity of Youth research project. We analysed semi–structured focus group interviews with 41 participants aged 16–24 using inductive thematic analysis. Sample is demographically diverse, including high school students, university students, and employed and unemployed youth who have already left formal education with variation across gender, urban/rural location, and educational level. We followed the principles of research ethics in the process of recruitment (informed consent, in case of minors also parental consent) and during data-gathering, management and analysis (pseudonymization and anonymization).

The analysis identifies three recurring tensions through which the relationship between digital imperatives and digital needs becomes visible. First, young people navigate the imperative to remain informed while facing information overload, negative news cycles, and uncertainty about credibility; this tension is managed through selective monitoring, avoidance, and heuristic assessments of trustworthy sources. Second, young people encounter digital competence as a taken-for-granted requirement in education and the labour market, alongside limited institutional support for developing the skills they consider relevant (e.g., privacy and security, financial and platform literacy, and credibility assessment). This tension contributes to the individualisation of responsibility and to self-initiated learning via platforms, peers, and paid courses—often described as abundant yet fragmented and difficult to navigate. Third, expectations of constant connection and affective availability in friendships and family life coexist with a need for digital disconnection; young people develop micro-strategies of limiting notifications, tracking screen time, deleting apps, and selectively disengaging, even while acknowledging that everyday infrastructures increasingly require digital access.

Conceptually, the paper advances a socio-cultural understanding of digital well-being and digital harm as emerging through situational, relational, and culturally mediated practices rather than as purely psychological states. By foregrounding negotiation as a central analytic lens, we contribute to digital media scholarship by clarifying how young people's digital needs are formed within, and not outside, the imperatives of digitalised societies.

CYM13 Understanding (Digitally) Mediated Childhoods

PP 1047 The paradox of platforms in PSMs: digital first adaptation, public value and media literacy for Generation Z at the BBC, RTBF and RTVE

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Generation Z consumes information and entertainment in a socio-digital ecosystem dominated by social media, where fragmentation and algorithmic personalisation are reshaping content access routines (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2021). For PSMs (*Public Service Media*), these third-party platforms become strategic spaces for negotiation (Poell et al., 2022),

attracting and adapting to youth needs (Burgess and Green, 2018), within a framework of individualised consumption and autonomous control known as media egocentrism (Costera-Meijer, 2023), through interactive and personalised content without renouncing their public value mission (Karadimitriou and Papathanassopoulos, 2024). This scenario is linked to the ATAWADAC paradigm and the *digital first* strategy (Robotham, 2021), where Instagram, TikTok and YouTube accelerate audiovisual change and connection with young people, while media egocentrism and self-curing reinforce virtual identities and selective exposure (Li, 2023). This highlights how the platform paradox (Olsen et al., 2024) challenges PSMs to maintain legitimacy and redefine digital public value (Cañedo and Rodríguez-Castro, 2024).

This research adopts a comparative qualitative design to explain the adaptation of PSMs to the consumption habits of Generation Z in the platform ecosystem. It is structured around three case studies selected for systemic variation, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004): RTVE (polarised pluralist), RTBF (democratic-corporatist) and BBC (liberal). Semi-structured interviews are conducted with executives and professionals from the three corporations to reconstruct institutional rationalities and editorial and multi-platform distribution strategies, and non-participant observation is carried out in the newsrooms of RTBF (Liège and Brussels) and RTVE (Madrid) to analyse routines, decision-making and digital innovation.

The results show that the adaptation of PSMs to young people is organised around *audience first* reorganisation and the 360º model institutionalise youth innovation through *Nouvelles Générations*, which operates as an editorial laboratory through projects aimed at young people with short formats, participation and media literacy, upholding public value in algorithmic environments and encouraging critical thinking. At the BBC, findings show a *digital first* strategy based on on-demand products and narratives adapted to social discovery, where distribution becomes a key editorial dimension for reaching fragmented audiences. At RTVE, the commitment to video podcasts, hosts with interesting profiles and digital brands, together with native news projects such as *YaTDigo*, reflects a hybrid logic between building its own ecosystem and circulating on external platforms. In all three cases, dependence on commercial infrastructures intensifies the paradox of platforms, by demanding youth relevance without diluting autonomy, legitimacy and public value mission.

In conclusion, adapting PSMs to Generation Z requires *digital first* strategies that produce native content for networks without diluting their public value mission. The comparison shows that platformisation and dependence on commercial infrastructures force PSMs to negotiate visibility and editorial autonomy, making media literacy a key factor in sustaining legitimacy and critical thinking among young people.

CYM13 Understanding (Digitally) Mediated Childhoods

PP 1048 How short-form video exposure shapes adolescents' attention: A longitudinal data-donation study

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Purpose

Short-form video (SFV) platforms such as TikTok have attracted over 1.5 billion users worldwide. The average adolescent spends up to two to three hours per day consuming such videos. Whereas audiences once engaged with mostly narrative-rich, long-form videos that required sustained attention, they are now increasingly immersed in fast-paced, loosely connected SFVs, a trend that shows no signs of slowing down. Due to its fast-paced and fragmented nature, educators, parents, and the general public have raised concerns about the potential negative effects of SFVs, particularly about diminished attention spans and declining academic performance among young users. To investigate these concerns, the present study uniquely combines longitudinal design, data-donation methods, and content-level analysis to examine how adolescents' exposure to SFVs influences distinct attentional mechanisms over time.

Literature review

A review of the existing literature indicates that most research on SFVs and attention relies heavily on cross-sectional survey designs, yielding mixed and often contradictory findings. While some studies report associations between SFV consumption, attentional difficulties, and lower academic performance, others find no such effects. A key limitation of this body of work is that cross-sectional methods offer limited capacity for establishing causal relationships between media use and attention. Furthermore, prior research rarely examines the types of content and attention-grabbing techniques users are actually exposed to. In addition, existing studies largely fail to investigate the mechanisms through which SFVs might influence attention. Given the fast-paced nature of SFVs, repeated exposure may encourage reliance on stimulus-driven (bottom-up) attention at the expense of goal-directed (top-down) attention. Over time, such habitual attentional orientation may make it more difficult for adolescents to sustain top-down attention, e.g., in the classroom. These gaps underscore the need for longitudinal research that examines how SFV exposure influences different attentional mechanisms, while also accounting for the specific attention-grabbing techniques adolescents encounter.

Methodology

To address these limitations, we are conducting a three-wave longitudinal data-donation study in which high-school students aged 16–18 exercise their GDPR-based right of data access to retrieve their personal TikTok and YouTube watch histories. Data collection, which ends in May, takes place at four-month intervals and includes a sample size of 527 participants based on a power analysis. Through a secure survey, participants complete the Attention Style Questionnaire, which assesses their

reliance on bottom-up versus top-down attentional styles, and upload their viewing histories, enabling precise analysis of the content they have consumed. Using qualitative content analysis, we are developing an inductive codebook that captures the full range of attention-grabbing techniques present in the donated videos. This approach allows us to identify and quantify the techniques to which adolescents are exposed to. Linear mixed-effects models will then be used to examine within- and between-person changes in attentional mechanisms over time as a function of exposure to different types of attention-grabbing techniques, the amount of viewed SFVs, and demographic and interpersonal variables.

To conclude

Importantly, by the time of the ECREA conference, data collection will have been completed and analysed, allowing us to present the longitudinal data donation design, the used analytical approaches, and the study's initial findings.

CYM13 Understanding (Digitally) Mediated Childhoods

PP 1049 Stability and change in youth media use: Italian-speaking part of Switzerland (2010–2024)

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Adolescents' everyday engagement with society is increasingly shaped by their digital media use, which structures how they access information, socialize, and navigate public life. In linguistically and culturally plural contexts, these dynamics may remain obscured in national-level analyses, as surveys often under-represent minority groups that differ socio-culturally and socio-economically from the national majority (Laganà et al., 2013). This study examines adolescents' media diet, understood as the overall composition of media exposure, combining frequency of use and types of content across media platforms (Anderson & Hanson, 2009) with a focus on digital media used for information and entertainment in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland (CH-I), a linguistic minority context, over time (2010–2024). The study addresses two research questions:

(RQ1) To what extent do adolescents' digital media practices for information and entertainment remain stable or change over time?

(RQ2) How do these changes reconfigure the balance between informational and leisure-oriented media use?

This study draws data from the Swiss JAMES survey, a nationally representative biennial survey of adolescents aged 12–19. Our analysis isolates CH-I subsample (comprising 2,466 respondents across waves) to examine region-specific changes in adolescents' digital media use for both entertainment and information purposes, between 2010 and 2024, that are not always visible in aggregated national reports.

Preliminary results indicate a strong continuity in adolescents' digital media use in CH-I marked by a persistent predominance of entertainment oriented use over information. Across surveys waves, leisure-oriented use form the stable core of everyday media engagement, despite major shifts in platforms and devices. CH-I is characterized by a distinctive configuration of entertainment-oriented practices, including consistently higher levels of exploratory online browsing and a comparatively stronger reliance on streaming films, documentaries, or television series. Regarding information use, adolescents in CH-I show largely stable patterns of online information access across the most recent surveys waves of the study. Information is mainly encountered through search engines, social media, video platforms, and general browsing, rather than through regular, intentional use of journalistic news outlets. This confirms a long-term tendency toward ambient or incidental news exposure within entertainment-oriented platforms.

Two contextual discontinuities punctuate this overall stability. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified streaming and social media use, further blurring the boundaries between informational and entertainment media use. In 2024, the diffusion of generative AI introduced a new informational gateway, with adolescents increasingly turning to AI-based interfaces (e.g., ChatGPT) to inform themselves, surpassing podcasts, radio, blogs, and digital newspapers.

By combining a longitudinal perspective with a focused examination of a linguistic minority context, this study highlights the importance of context-sensitive and temporally grounded approaches to youth media research and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how digital media environments are experienced and navigated by adolescents in culturally plural societies.

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CYM14 Risk and Resilience in Digital Childhoods

PP 1146 Navigating online stress: Adolescents' coping processes across different types of stressful online experiences

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The internet offers a wide range of opportunities for participation, creativity and learning, while at the same time exposing adolescents to various risks that may be experienced as (emotionally) stressful. As opportunities and risks often go hand in hand, adolescents cannot fully avoid negative online experiences without restricting digital participation. Understanding how adolescents cope with such experiences is therefore crucial. While the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) conceptualizes coping as a dynamic process, existing research on adolescents' online coping has predominantly examined isolated strategies or focused on specific risk phenomena, leaving a gap in process-oriented analyses across different types of online stressors.

Against this background, the present qualitative study examines adolescents' coping processes through the lens of the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Drawing on 40 semi-structured interviews with adolescents aged 12 to 17, the study identifies four types of stressful online experiences – differentiated according to subjective stress levels and the temporal characteristics of the stressor –, each of which is associated with distinct coping patterns.

Type 1 experiences are short-term and low in stress (e.g., annoying messages, spam, minor insults). Adolescents typically employ immediate, problem-focused coping (e.g., blocking, deleting, muting), often drawing on routinized strategies that quickly terminate the situation and contribute to appraising it as manageable. Type 2 experiences are also time-limited but elicit stronger emotional stress (e.g., unwanted sexual messages, being hacked). Coping involves a combination of problem-focused strategies aimed at ending or de-escalating the situation and emotion-focused strategies (e.g., distraction, cognitive reappraisal, retaliation) to regulate distress, sometimes supplemented by social support from peers or parents. Type 3 experiences are ongoing and dynamic (e.g., cyberbullying, grooming), and perceived as highly stressful. Coping unfolds as a complex process that goes beyond reacting to single events, encompassing efforts to interrupt harmful dynamics, mobilize support, and engage in longer-term emotional processing and self-stabilization. Type 4 experiences are persistent but low in intensity (e.g., social comparison, social pressure to be available) and are managed primarily through continuous emotion-focused coping, particularly cognitive reappraisal to protect self-worth.

Overall, the findings highlight that adolescents' coping processes vary substantially depending on the intensity and temporal structure of online stressors. Prevention and support efforts should therefore move beyond teaching isolated strategies and instead foster flexible coping repertoires that can be adapted to different online stress contexts.

By applying the transactional model of stress and coping to a broad range of digital stressors, this study advances a process-oriented understanding of adolescents' coping with online stressors. Rather than conceptualizing coping as the use of isolated strategies, the findings demonstrate how coping unfolds over time in response to differences in subjective stress intensity and the temporal structure of online stress experiences.

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CYM14 Risk and Resilience in Digital Childhoods

PP 1147 Digital coping: Smartphone use among Ukrainian refugee children in the first week of war

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This study explores how Ukrainian refugee children, aged 10–14, used smartphones during the **first week of displacement** following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. During this critical period of uncertainty and trauma, smartphones emerged as essential tools for emotional coping and maintaining personal and cultural identity. The research highlights how digital practices allowed children to navigate immediate crises and form early strategies for resilience.

Drawing on 35 semi-structured interviews conducted in a Polish refugee camp, the study examines the routines, strategies, and meanings associated with smartphone use. Findings reveal that children developed highly adaptive practices within just days of displacement. Smartphones functioned as instruments of **emotional regulation**, allowing children to manage stress and anxiety through messaging, video calls, games, and media consumption. One participant vividly described the intensity of this attachment: *"I didn't let it (the smartphone) out of my hands"*, reflecting the device's role as a lifeline in moments of acute fear.

Smartphones also facilitated **social connectivity**, helping children maintain contact with family, friends, and peers from their home communities. Digital tools provided continuity, mitigated isolation, and enabled children to share experiences collectively. Additionally, smartphones served as **repositories of memory and identity**, preserving photos, messages, and videos that connected children to their pre-war lives and cultural heritage.

The study highlights how young refugees negotiated **risks and boundaries** in digital spaces, balancing the need for information and connection with concerns about safety and exposure to distressing content. These practices demonstrate agency, problem-solving, and the capacity to co-create supportive social networks even in moments of acute crisis.

By focusing on smartphone-mediated coping in the first week of displacement, this research emphasizes the crucial role of digital media in **immediate crisis management**, emotional support, and identity preservation. The findings have implications for educators, social workers, and policymakers, highlighting the need for safe digital access and culturally sensitive interventions for young refugees.

CYM14 Risk and Resilience in Digital Childhoods

PP 1148 Understanding adolescents' online risk perception: The role of parenting and experience

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Adolescents' online practices may expose them to several risks (Smahel et al., 2020). Beyond actual exposure, how adolescents perceive the likelihood and severity of such risks is central to understanding their decision-making, risk-taking, and the effectiveness of preventive communication (Mýlek et al., 2023). Within the parental mediation framework, parents are assumed to shape adolescents' interpretations of online risks through active and restrictive mediation strategies (Young & Tully, 2022). However, previous research has produced inconsistent findings, and less is known about how parental mediation operates alongside adolescents' psychological resources, peer influences, and their own experiential engagement with online risks. Understanding how they perceive the severity and likelihood of these risks is central for designing effective prevention strategies. As an illustrative example, this study focuses on risk perceptions related to meeting online contacts offline-a common concern among parents and adolescent alike that is often considered highly risky due to potential harmful outcomes such as physical or sexual assault (Auxerie et al., 2020; Greene-Colozzi et al., 2020). This study examines parental mediation practices (active and restrictive), psychological factors (social self-efficacy, self-esteem, sensation seeking), peer norms regarding face-to-face meetings and adolescents' own experiences with such meetings as predictors of adolescents' risk perception (likelihood and severity). Using hierarchical multiple regression, we analyzed data from a survey of 2,500 Czech adolescents (age M = 13.44, SD = 1.74; 50% female), of which 31.7% had experiences with face-to-face meetings.

Results show that parental mediation remains relevant for adolescents' risk perceptions, but its effects vary by mediation style and risk dimension. Active parental mediation was associated with higher perceived likelihood and severity of online risks, suggesting that parent–child communication may foster greater awareness and interpretative sensitivity toward potential online harms. Restrictive mediation showed mixed effects, being positively associated with risk likelihood but negatively with severity. Among psychological factors, sensation seeking was negatively related to perceived severity, while self-esteem was positively associated with severity but not likelihood. Gender differences emerged, with males perceiving both lower likelihood and severity of risks compared to females. Peer norms about face-to-face meetings with online contacts significantly predicted perceived severity, with adolescents perceiving risks as less severe when such meetings were more common among their friends. However, norms did not predict risk likelihood. Previous experiences with the meetings emerged as the strongest predictor, which was associated with lower risk perceptions (both likelihood and severity). Our results thus highlight the importance of viewing adolescents' online risk perception as a communicative and experiential process shaped not only by parental mediation but also by adolescents' self-concepts, peer contexts, and lived media experiences. These results underscore the importance of active parental communication and suggest that prevention efforts should address processes of risk normalization that may arise from both peer influence and repeated engagement in risky online behaviors.

CYM14 Risk and Resilience in Digital Childhoods

PP 1149 Empowering children's digital resilience: How children voice their needed support to effectively cope with online risks

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To be digitally resilient in today's digital media society, it is important that children use coping strategies (e.g., self-monitoring, seeking support) that help them deal with online risks. Previous research shows that children experience several barriers that hinder them from using coping strategies when dealing with online risks. Examples of barriers include, not perceiving online risks as important, low confidence in their ability to perform coping strategies, a lack of support from the environment, and a lack of knowledge and skills.

To empower children's digital resilience, it is crucial to understand what children need to overcome the barriers that prevent them from using coping strategies. The current study aims to gain more insight into these needs. We use a qualitative approach that focuses on children's perspectives, recognizing that children themselves have valuable suggestions about

how they can best be supported to cope with online risks. By drawing on children's experiential knowledge, we explore what they need (i.e., who can support them and what they need to do) to overcome barriers to their coping strategies.

In a participatory research project, 52 children (i.e., 9 to 11 years old) explored their online world through interactive activities. During these activities, children explored their online challenges, coping strategies for dealing with them, the barriers to implementing those strategies, and co-created solutions to overcome those barriers. The co-created solutions were presented in a form of an artwork, in which children visualized who could support them and what those individuals needed to do to support them in overcoming the barriers to their coping strategies. As the data collection was completed recently, we are currently conducting an inductive thematic analysis of the data collected during the co-creation of solutions (i.e., verbatim transcripts of audio-recorded group discussions and photographs of children's artwork showcasing their solutions).

Preliminary results revealed that children need support from various people to effectively cope with online risks. Children predominantly mentioned people in their direct environment, such as family members (e.g., caregivers, siblings) and friends. They reasoned that this is because they trusted these individuals, felt these individuals knew them best, and believed they could effectively help them by providing various types of knowledge, such as explanations of the consequences and the importance of performing coping strategies and how to perform them. Moreover, children mentioned individuals outside of their direct environment, such as app developers and politicians. They expressed that they believed these individuals could effectively help them by creating a safe online environment, such as ensuring consequences for hackers or digital hostility.

Overall, this study enhances our understanding of what children need to effectively apply coping strategies to handle online risks. While sometimes difficult to articulate, children voiced their need for support from others as they desire fun and safe online experiences. In the presentation, we will delve deeper into how children articulate what their environment can do to support them in effectively coping with online risks, and discuss how these insights can be used to empower children's digital resilience.

CDE01 Democracy, AI, and the Struggle Against Misinformation in Digital Publics

PP 0076 Illiberal strategies: Disinformation in Viktor Orbán's political communication

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Democracy has been in decline globally, with a clear pattern of democratic backsliding observable since the 1970s (Wunsch and Blanchard, 2023). This process unfolds incrementally and is frequently driven by a dominant executive that weakens institutional checks and balances (Bermeo, 2016), through limits on political participation, concentration of power, and manipulation of the media (Carothers and Hartnett, 2024). Illiberal leaders often frame politics as a moral divide, while polarisation fragments society and weakens accountability (McCoy et al. 2018). Within this polarised environment, the strategic use of disinformation has become a powerful instrument of backsliding (Boese et al., 2022).

Disinformation, defined as false or misleading information spread with intent to deceive, serves as a key mechanism through which illiberal leaders deepen polarisation and consolidate power (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). As democratic backsliding often stems from the actions of duly elected leaders (Haggard & Kaufman, 2021), this study examines how disinformation is embedded directly in their political communication. While prior research has mainly examined disinformation circulating online, in traditional media, or within specific genres such as conspiracy narratives (Douglas et al., 2019), far less is known about how illiberal leaders employ it in their political communication. Addressing this gap is crucial because political communication by state leaders lends disinformation institutional credibility.

Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orbán offers a highly relevant case for analysing how disinformation operates within illiberal political communication, given its designation as the European Union's (EU) first electoral autocracy (Lührmann & Lindberg, 2019). Based on a qualitative content analysis of publicly available documents (Puppis, 2019), the study examines the types and themes of disinformation in Orbán's rhetoric. The dataset consists of 40 speeches, statements, and interviews from Orbán's fourth term, selected to capture a phase of advanced backsliding. A literature-based coding framework was applied drawing on Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) and Humprecht et al. (2020) to identify disinformation types and on Kapantai et al. (2021) to capture thematic narratives. This enables a systematic and conceptually grounded assessment of Orbán's political communication.

The analysis identified three types: biased or one-sided information, conspiracy narratives, and fabricated information. Biased or one-sided information was most frequent and illustrated how Orbán selectively presents facts to polarise the public and discredit opponents. Conspiracy narratives, especially those centred on George Soros, portrayed international actors as threats seeking to undermine Hungary. Fabricated information, though less common, reinforced governmental claims and national legitimacy. Four broader themes were also identified: populist framing, delegitimization of democratic institutions, appeals to nationalism or cultural identity, and nativism. Populist framing divides the virtuous Hungarian people from corrupt elites, deepening polarisation and loyalty to Orbán. The delegitimization of democratic institutions undermines trust in the EU, the judiciary, and the opposition, weakening accountability. Appeals to nationalism and cultural identity justify exclusionary policies and frame dissent as betrayal, while nativism portrays Hungary as under cultural and demographic threat. The findings show that disinformation in Orbán's communication sustains backsliding, underscoring the need to better understand this process to envision a future built on resilience rather than erosion.

CDE01 Democracy, AI, and the Struggle Against Misinformation in Digital Publics

PP 0077 Contesting Trust, delegating Truth, resolving Uncertainty? Communicative AI as an Epistemic Authority in democratic sense-Making and Public Debate

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In modern societies, knowledge has expanded and fragmented, making individuals dependent on trust in epistemic authorities. Epistemic authority is not confined to individuals but can also be attributed to collectives, institutions, and technologies, including AI-chatbots and LLMs (Jäger, 2025). Who and what is recognized as epistemic authority is shifting in the digital transformation of knowledge orders (Neuberger et al., 2023), generating growing uncertainty about what to accept as knowledge and whom to trust (Bartsch et al 2025). Communication research has largely framed this as an epistemic crisis, focusing on declining trust in traditional authorities like science and journalism. Less attention has been paid to how new epistemic authorities emerge and how they are communicatively constructed in public debate. Epistemic authority depends on mutual recognition of competence and credibility. Even when AI is not explicitly invoked, its potential 'summoning' shapes expectations of truthfulness, justification, and accountability (Shin, 2025).

This study examines how epistemic authority is ascribed, contested, and maintained in interaction with communicative AI, exemplified by Grok, the AI chatbot integrated into X, and how these dynamics affect democratic sense-making and participation. The analysis draws on personal epistemologies (Schwarzenegger, 2020) and folk theories of AI (diLodovico et

al., 2025; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021), capturing how people intuitively assess what AI can "know," how answers are produced, and when it should be trusted as a contributor to public reasoning.

Empirically, the study analyses X posts and interactions involving @Grok between late 2024 and 2025, focusing on exchanges where Grok is explicitly invoked through formulations such as "Is this true?" These mark moments when communicative AI acts as an epistemic actor in public controversies. The analysis focuses on situations of invocation, interactional positioning, and responses.

Three principal orientations of invocation are identified: verification, authentication, and explanation. Verification includes prompts such as "Is this true?" in political, social, or cultural debates, often functioning as performative gestures of epistemic superiority, delegating validation to AI to discredit others. Authentication involves requests such as "Is this real?" to verify images or videos, reflecting concerns about the boundaries of reality; Grok's responses are frequently contested. Explanation involves requests for contextualization or evaluation, positioning Grok as both fact-checker and interpreter in public sense-making.

Grok's epistemic authority remains unstable. Invocation exposes users to social correction and ridicule, shaping participation and public engagement, while others resist by highlighting alleged bias or prompt-dependency. Importantly, these negotiations are also influenced by attributions to Grok's origin and symbolic association with Elon Musk as a politically controversial figure. Grok thus functions both as a resource for activism, deliberation, and debate and as an object of (anti-) democratic struggles over meaning and authority. Simultaneously, it is mobilized to mediate disputes, adjudicate contested claims, or symbolically settle conflicts. Its authority does not stem from presumed epistemic superiority (Ferrario et al., 2024) and Communicative AI redistributes rather than resolves epistemic uncertainty. We conclude that the democratic potential of AI as epistemic authority is less a matter of informational accuracy than of continuous (politicized) negotiations of credibility, trust, and legitimacy.

CDE01 Democracy, AI, and the Struggle Against Misinformation in Digital Publics

PP 0078 Understanding older adults' management of misinformation and its relevance in the democratization of the digital sphere

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Misinformation has been widely discussed as a threat to democracy; however, the phenomenon remains underexplored in later life, among cohorts whose media repertoires are uniquely shaped by both legacy and digital logics. Our study was initially motivated by the misinformation paradox identified by Munyaka et al. (2022): although older adults report being concerned about the veracity of news and know how to verify it online, they also constitute the age cohort deemed to share most fake news. Explanations proposed in previous research include cognitive decline in very advanced age, limited digital literacy, media cynicism generated over the years, loneliness, the need for affiliation, and caring for others. Another set of findings suggests that older adults may be more susceptible to sharing misinformation simply because they are more frequently targeted, as evidenced by their being the age group most exposed to fake news on Facebook during the 2016 and 2020 US elections.

Our research contributes to this debate by examining how these explanatory factors integrate into the everyday digital practices of older adults. We defined a qualitative study involving 20 older adults (aged 65 to 87) living in Barcelona (Catalonia, Spain). Drawing on interviews, self-reported digital activity logs, and focus groups, the study investigates how older adults navigate, negotiate, and manage information and misinformation in their daily lives. Preliminary results are noteworthy. First, in line with previous research, some younger older adult participants are relatively well-equipped to protect themselves from misinformation. Thematic analysis further reveals that participants who frequently encounter fake news or distorted content do so as a result of their online behaviour, which is driven by curiosity, including access to entertainment and the exploration of diverse political views. By contrast, participants who report limited exposure to fake news tend to follow routines of restricted news consumption, which, at least in the case of left-wing participants, includes avoiding exposure to right-wing media. However, participants may relax these strict standards when engaging with meaningful personal connections and culturally relevant content.

These findings highlight the need for a broader perspective in misinformation research. Existing interventions primarily emphasise individual responsibility through digital literacy and debunking strategies, overlooking structural drivers such as the market-oriented production and circulation of distorted content (Díaz-Ruiz, 2025). In our research, older adults demonstrated awareness of misinformation threats and maintained consistent media habits. Those more exposed to misinformation are driven by behaviours that, far from being problematic, are part of intersubjective meaning-making, a core condition for communicative action and democratic life (Habermas, 1984). In other words, behaving in accordance with democratic virtues makes them vulnerable to exposure to misinformation. Beyond advocating for algorithmic and platform literacy, we also provide a more comprehensive explanation for the paradox. Taken together, misinformation and platforms'

visibility mechanisms are eroding the logic of traditional forms of intersubjectivity formation, which are still prevalent in the practices of older adults regarding politics and media consumption.

CDE01 Democracy, AI, and the Struggle Against Misinformation in Digital Publics

PP 0079 Localizing and co-designing game-based interventions to foster resilience against misinformation: A case study from the Czech Republic

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Contemporary democracies are increasingly shaped by fragmented communication environments, platform logic, and polarized public discourse, in which misinformation constitutes a structural challenge to democratic participation and trust. The resilience to misinformation is closely linked to media literacy as a civic competence that supports informed participation beyond formal political institutions. While game-based interventions have been proposed as participatory tools for fostering such competencies, limited empirical research has examined how these interventions can be localized to reflect specific contexts.

This paper presents a qualitative case study of a localized educational escape game implemented in the Czech Republic and examines how participatory co-design with learners contributed to its contextual relevance and democratic communicative potential. The study asks how participatory design with learners can influence the localization and effectiveness of a game-based intervention aimed at fostering resilience against misinformation, with a focus on how learners' everyday media experiences, democratic concerns, and interpretations of public discourse shape the redesign process.

Methodologically, the study adopts a participatory design framework combining co-design workshops with iterative empirical testing involving more than 100 participants. Data was collected through surveys, workshop artefacts, observation notes, and structured qualitative feedback following gameplay. Two testing phases were conducted: an initial localized version and a revised version developed in response to participant input. Data outputs were analyzed thematically, focusing on representations of misinformation, perceptions of relevance, and engagement with the game as a communicative space.

Findings indicate that participants framed misinformation primarily through their everyday information practices, national political discourse, and perceived threats to democratic deliberation. Feedback from the first testing phase revealed tensions between the original game design and local imaginaries, prompting redesigns that emphasized culturally specific contexts, collective decision-making, and reflective discussion. The second testing phase suggests that these participatory-driven modifications affect perceived relevance, engagement, and learning potential of the game.

The paper concludes with recommendations for designers of game-based interventions and organizations (e.g., libraries, civic organizations) implementing these interventions and identifies directions for further research on long-term research on resilience to misinformation.

CDE01 Democracy, AI, and the Struggle Against Misinformation in Digital Publics

PP 0080 AI-mediated counterspeech against misinformation in Turkish media: Actors, challenges, and opportunities

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In Turkey's contemporary media landscape—characterised by strong state influence, political polarisation, and intensified regulation—digital public discourse has become saturated with misinformation, coordinated harassment, and hate speech. These dynamics pose significant threats to democratic deliberation and disproportionately target journalists, fact-checkers, and marginalised voices. As professional communicators and civil society actors struggle to respond to orchestrated online attacks and disinformation campaigns, artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a potential support mechanism for detecting, analysing, and countering uncivil online communication.

This paper examines how AI-driven tools and practices can assist Turkish actors—particularly independent journalists, fact-checking organisations, and citizen counterspeakers—in mitigating misinformation and online abuse. Focusing on key initiatives within Turkey's fact-checking and independent media ecosystem, the study analyses the work of Teyit.org, founded by journalist Mehmet Atakan Foça, which specialises in verifying viral claims and visual misinformation; Doğruluk Payı, which evaluates politicians' statements and mobilises civic participation through its İzlemedeyiz volunteer network; and Bianet, a long-standing independent media outlet facilitating citizen journalism and counterspeech. The paper also considers the role of internationally connected but locally active initiatives such as Fact-Checking Turkey, coordinated by the Bosphorus Center for Global Affairs.

Methodologically, the research draws on qualitative interviews with journalists, fact-checkers, and civic volunteers, complemented by an analytical review of AI-enhanced tools currently deployed or under consideration by these actors. The analysis explores how AI can contribute to early detection of harmful content, assist in evidence-based rebuttals, automate

elements of verification work, and reduce the emotional and cognitive burden associated with sustained exposure to online hostility. At the same time, the paper critically interrogates the limitations and risks of AI-assisted counterspeech in Turkey's high-stakes media environment, including algorithmic bias, the erosion of perceived authenticity in AI-generated responses, and the potential displacement of human agency in civic engagement.

To address these challenges, the paper argues for a participatory co-design approach that brings together fact-checking organisations, journalists, technologists, and civil society actors in Turkey. Such collaboration, supported by transparent governance structures and context-sensitive ethical guidelines, is presented as essential to ensuring that AI tools reinforce—rather than undermine—democratic communication practices. By foregrounding specific actors and practices within a non-Western, politically constrained media system, this study contributes to broader debates on human–AI collaboration, digital democracy, and the ethics of mediated counterspeech.

CDE02 Radical Right Mobilizations and Democratic Contestation in Europe's Digital Public Sphere

PP 0081 Between free speech and digital sovereignty: European far-right party discourse on online harms and social media regulation

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The rise of far-right parties in the US and Europe has led to growing discussions about the legitimacy of social media regulation and the need for greater digital sovereignty. In this context, this study examines how far-right parties frame online safety debates and digital sovereignty across Germany, Sweden, and the UK. While these countries have historically diverging approaches to speech regulation and democratic resilience, all of them were recently singled out by the US government, and most notably Vice President JD Vance, to delegitimise European digital governance models as censorship regimes (Wintour 2025). The analysis is hence explores the tension between the far-right adoption of transatlantic free speech rhetoric versus nationalist sovereignty appeals of 'taking back control'.

While central to contemporary platform governance discourse, there is limited scholarship on how the concepts of safety, risk, harm and (digital) sovereignty are contested by European political actors. A notable exception is Griffin (2025) and their mapping of public authorities, corporate actors and civil society organisations involved in the 'social construction' of 'systemic risk' in the EU. More broadly, research has highlighted the key role free speech tropes and censorship accusations play in contemporary far-right mobilisation (Feldman & Jackson 2014). Yet, a systematic comparison of European far-right party positioning on digital regulation remains under-explored in the literature — a significant gap given the growing political influence of far-right parties on European governments.

To address this gap, this research investigates how the German AfD, the Sweden Democrats and Reform UK/UKIP articulate their positions on digital regulation on social media. Using corpus-assisted discourse analysis of over 1,000 YouTube transcripts, the paper maps key contested concepts — safety, risk, and harm — and identifies how parties attribute sources and targets. Initial findings reveal a growing prominence of digital regulation discussions in far-right party social media content, with frequent attempts to connect debates to the key issue of contemporary far-right mobilisation, namely immigration. Similarly, censorship accusations and victimhood framing are shared across the countries, yet national contexts shape their specific articulations. For example, the AfD emphasises privacy concerns while Reform UK/UKIP focuses on child safety.

Overall the preliminary analysis suggests an emerging transnational discourse of (digital) sovereignty, driven by fundamental dissent against perceived 'mainstream' party positions. However, this discourse is not uniform; national sensitivities, historical contexts and government positions significantly shape far-right framing. More generally, this re-search contributes to a critical understanding of how far-right actors are re-conceptualising digital sovereignty — with potentially significant implications for European and transatlantic digital policy.

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CDE02 Radical Right Mobilizations and Democratic Contestation in Europe's Digital Public Sphere

PP 0082 The discourse and ideology of the populist European radical right: Patriotism, nationalism, and sovereignty

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This article offers a critical discourse analysis of political speeches delivered at the *Patriots Summit* by five leading figures of contemporary European radical right-wing populism: Santiago Abascal (Vox, Spain), Marine Le Pen (Rassemblement

National, France), Viktor Orbán (Fidesz, Hungary), André Ventura (Chega, Portugal), and Geert Wilders (Partij voor de Vrijheid, Netherlands). Drawing on theoretical contributions from Ernesto Laclau, Teun van Dijk, Murray Edelman, and Ruth Wodak, the study conceptualizes populism as a discursive logic that constructs antagonisms between "the people" and "the elites," mobilizing emotions, identities, and symbolic boundaries.

Methodologically, the research combines qualitative critical discourse analysis with computational text analysis. The corpus consists of public speeches delivered at the Patriots Summit held in Madrid in February 2025. After textual cleaning and preparation, lexical frequency analysis, thematic categorization, and network visualization were conducted using Python and NetworkX. Six central discursive axes were identified: sovereignty, immigration, national identity, anti-elitism, economy, and security. These dimensions structure a shared populist grammar across national contexts while allowing for strategic variation among leaders.

The findings reveal strong discursive convergence among the analyzed actors, despite differences in tone and national specificity. All speeches articulate a polarized worldview grounded in the opposition between a virtuous, homogeneous people and a set of internal and external enemies, including supranational institutions, political elites, immigrants, and liberal or progressive forces. Symbolic devices such as the "savior leader," narratives of civilizational decline, and appeals to threatened national sovereignty are recurrent. Fear emerges as a central affective resource, functioning alongside narratives of restoration and hope tied to sovereignty, tradition, and cultural identity.

The article contributes to the literature on European radical right populism by demonstrating how transnational discursive patterns are consolidated through shared rhetorical strategies, emotional appeals, and symbolic constructions. It highlights the central role of discourse in legitimizing illiberal political projects and in reshaping the ideological boundaries of contemporary European democracies.

CDE02 Radical Right Mobilizations and Democratic Contestation in Europe's Digital Public Sphere

PP 0083 Right-wing politics, pro-life movement, and personal growth influencers united against gender equality? Mapping the network of online anti-gender mobilisations in the Czech Republic

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Anti-gender discourse, typically in the form of attacks against gender equality, feminism, or the so-called gender ideology, has been spreading in the last decade in Western liberal democracies as part of the conservative backlash against liberalism. However, gendered mis- and disinformation is not limited to far-right politics, the usual scholarly focus. In the era of participatory media and lifestyle influencers, we observe how women, LGBTQ+ people, and gender and sexual minorities are disproportionately targeted by hate actors, and anti-gender narratives are among the main drivers of societal polarisation. The Czech Republic long appeared as an island of liberalism in the changing political landscape of the CEE region. Anti-gender mobilisations, although present in right-wing political discourse and agendas of a few conservative initiatives, had limited impact on official policy. After the 2025 parliamentary elections, mobilising voters around anti-liberal positions, including anti-gender discourse, has proven to be an effective political strategy, with openly anti-gender actors, some of them previous online influencers, forming part of the new government.

As media and communication scholars, we view anti-gender rhetoric not only as a strategic tool of extreme political actors but as a broader "anti-discourse" or "metalanguage" enabling diverse actors to mobilise online communities around anti-gender narratives, for political or business reasons. These narratives unite online users who may feel marginalised or alienated, offering recognition through shared, albeit imagined, collective cis-gender identities.

We focus on the Czech context and explore how these social dynamics manifest locally. Our research employs a mixed-method approach to map various actors for which anti-gender serves as a symbolic unifier. Using the AI-powered monitoring tool Gerulata Juno, adapted to the specific requirements of this study, we collected data across multiple social media and messaging platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, X, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Through a predefined set of thematic hashtags and key actors, we mapped the large-scale dissemination network of original and redistributed content related to the online anti-gender agenda in Czechia, which was then subjected to qualitative network and content analysis.

We reveal that anti-gender discourses extend beyond extreme right-wing politics to include conservative identity movements associated with religious groups, as well as content created by lifestyle and personal development coaches, pickup artists and other influencers. We demonstrate how these actors translate anti-gender rhetoric to language that is comprehensible to domestic audiences and resonates with their everyday lives, and point out the disturbing emergence of therapy-oriented profiles promoting gender essentialism, including attacks against gender equality.

By combining AI-assisted mapping with qualitative analysis of profile and actor types, their target audiences, professional focuses, and specific anti-gender agendas, we develop a framework that illustrates which agendas these mobilisations align with and the types of actors promoting them. This analysis sheds light on how anti-gender narratives are propagated across the digital landscape in a post-socialist Central European context characterised by democratic backsliding in neighbouring countries and recent shifts in domestic political development. It is thus crucial for a better understanding of the abuse of gender issues in spreading hatred and dividing European societies.

CDE02 Radical Right Mobilizations and Democratic Contestation in Europe's Digital Public Sphere

PP 1153 Navigating existential uncertainty: How do social media influence political extremism?

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Democratic societies are increasingly shaped by a pervasive sense of crisis. War, economic insecurity, democratic backsliding, and rapid technological transformation converge into what is described as a global polycrisis. In this context, political extremism has gained renewed momentum across Europe, posing serious challenges to democratic norms and stability. While social media are frequently implicated, dominant explanations focus on cognitive mechanisms such as echo chambers and mis- or disinformation. Howver, such accounts overlook a crucial dimension in times of polycrisis: the emotional cultivation of existential uncertainty.

This study thus conceptualizes social media as an existential uncertainty amplifier, integrating cultivation theory (Hermann et al., 2021) with the stress-based model of political extremism (Canetti-Nisim et al., 2009). This theoretical framework posits that social media may disproportionately amplify threat-oriented content about social and political issues. Repeated exposure to such content can foster "mean world syndrome," causing individuals to perceive society as far more dangerous than it actually is. This distorted perception can make extreme ideologies particularly attractive, as their rigid worldviews, strong leaders, and simplistic radical solutions offer a psychological coping mechanism (van Prooijen & Krouwel, 2019). Moreover, the study builds on scholarship on social media curation (Thorson & Battocchio, 2024; Zhu & Skoric, 2025), examining whether and how individuals manage distress from such exposure through filtering, avoidance, and disconnection.

Grounded in this framework, the study addresses three research questions: How do individuals experience threat-focused social media content, and how does it influence existential uncertain and, in turn, political extremism? Do individuals curate such content, if yes, how and why, and how does curation moderate the relationship between threat-focused content exposure and extremism?

To answer these questions, we employs a mixed-method approach, combining in-depth interviews with a two-wave panel survey conducted in the Netherlands during and after the 2025 general election—a period marked by heightened uncertainty following a year of governance by a coalition led by the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) and the subsequent government collapse. Drawing on purposive sampling to ensure a demographically and ideologically diverse sample (N = 30), the interviews make sense of individuals' experiences and practices. Following that, the population-based panel survey (N = 1,000) tests a moderated mediation model assessing whether threat-focused content exposure is associated with heightened existential anxiety and extremism over time, and whether this process is conditioned by curation.

Preliminary analyses suggest that exposure to threat-laden content is common and often associated with feelings of insecurity, emotional overwhelm, and societal pessimism. This prompts curation practices such as unfollowing accounts, leaving groups, attempting to "train" algorithms, or disconnecting from platforms. Such practices are often motivated by efforts to regain control and protect emotional well-being, though some participants report "doomscrolling," which is associated with heightened anxiety and support for more extreme parties or positions.

This study contributes to scholarship on media and democracy: it demonstrates how social media may undermine democratic stability indirectly by cultivating existential insecurity. It reconceptualizes personal curation as an emotionally consequential democratic practice, offering insights into emotional resilience in politically turbulent times.

CDE03 Journalism, Media Legitimacy, and Democratic Transformations Across Contexts

PP 0185 Journalistic roles and dynamics of democratic backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe

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The goal of this paper is to explore the changes in journalistic roles and their predictors during democratic backsliding in the third wave of autocratization (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). Trends of autocratization and democratic backsliding are closely linked to media institutions and journalism. Maerz et al. (2020) suggest that "early warnings" of autocratization are attempts to repress civil society and media freedom. The first strategy of autocratic leaders is to "neutralize" or eliminate media and civil society institutions as watchdogs of political power. This crackdown on media and civil society paves the way to a crackdown on elections in the later phase of the autocratization (Maerz et al., 2020). However, processes of autocratization can fail as some systems show a higher level of democratic resilience, and some systems manage to democratize (Angiolillo et al., 2024). There are also ways in which media and journalism can build resilience amid various structural pressures (Relly and Waisbord, 2022). In this paper, we are interested in whether there are dynamic changes in the ways journalists perceive their role depending on the autocratizing or democratizing trends in the wider political context. Journalistic roles help to place journalistic work in the framework of meaning, are distributed differently across political and media systems, and are linked to the level of democratization (Hanitzch et al., 2019). To answer this question, we will analyze typologies of journalistic roles using Latent Class Analysis on data collected through the comparative research

project 'Worlds of Journalism' from the second wave (2012–2016) and third wave (2021–2025) of the study. Predictors used to explain typologies will be on the macro level (the political system and the democratizing/autocratizing trend), the mezzo level (the media ownership type), and the micro level (perception of influences and safety). We will analyze these dynamics in countries from the third wave of democratization, which have varying levels of democracy and media freedom, including those that have been democratizing (Albania, Czechia, Estonia) and those that have been autocratizing over the last decade (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, Serbia).

Keywords

Journalistic roles, autocratization, democratization, Worlds of Journalism, comparative research

CDE03 Journalism, Media Legitimacy, and Democratic Transformations Across Contexts

PP 0186 Should journalism go platform? A comparative study in small and large European markets

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The rapid expansion of social media and platform-based distribution has fundamentally reshaped the production, circulation, and authority of news, challenging the position of legacy journalism and raising questions about who can legitimately claim the role of journalist. This paper examines how public service media (PSM), as normative models of institutional journalism, are responding to these transformations and what these responses mean for journalism's democratic role.

Drawing on Habermasian theories of the public sphere, the study interrogates the widely accepted assumption that the decline of institutional journalism necessarily threatens liberal democracy. Rather than taking this relationship for granted, the paper asks whether the current "crisis" of journalism might create opportunities to rethink public communication in more progressive and inclusive ways. The paper presents the result of research from four European case studies assessing the extent to which platform-based journalism is reconfiguring the public sphere beyond traditional, elite-driven models towards more pluralistic and potentially agonistic forms of public discourse.

The research focuses on public service media because of their statutory commitments to the public interest and their relative insulation from purely commercial pressures. As social media platforms increasingly function as primary arenas of public discourse, PSM face strategic choices about whether and how to engage with them. The study asks: How do PSM organisations claim to use platforms? How do they use them in practice? And how does platform engagement shape journalism's role in democratic life and the public sphere?

Methodologically, the paper adopts a mixed-methods, comparative approach across. First, it analyses official platform strategy documents to identify how PSM articulate their normative and strategic goals. Second, these claims are examined through guided interviews with managers and digital content creators to assess everyday editorial practice. Third, content analysis of platform-native outputs investigates how journalistic norms are transferred or transformed in multimodal, platform-specific formats.

Overall, the paper explores whether PSM engagement with platforms reinforces existing Habermasian models of mediated public discourse or opens space for alternative conceptions of the public sphere in contemporary democracies.

CDE03 Journalism, Media Legitimacy, and Democratic Transformations Across Contexts

PP 0187 Media meltdown? Changes in media legitimacy and political orientation across Europe, 2016–2023

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Scholars have signaled that there is a crisis in the legitimacy of journalism: an increasing group of citizens appears skeptical or indifferent about how mainstream news media report on current affairs (Carlson, 2017; Liminga & Strömbäck, 2023). Mainstream media – such as newspapers, television networks, public broadcasters – are viewed upon negatively by significant parts of society. Part of this antagonism seems politically motivated as right-wing populist leaders across the world purposively attack journalistic media in order to sway public opinion (Carlsson et al., 2021; Meeks, 2020; Hameleers, 2020). At the same time, there is also a growing divergence in how people use media to inform themselves on current affairs which seems linked to socioeconomic divides (e.g. Lindell, 2018).

Using European data from the period 2016–2023, this research will investigate media legitimacy among European audiences. Despite conceptual analyses of journalism scholars-- often focusing on discursive elements (see Carlson, 2017; Tong, 2018)-- media legitimacy is not well studied. Most research has focused on trust in news media (e.g. Strömbäck et al., 2020), but – although related – this is not the same. Moderate levels of trust can also be viewed as a healthy critical stance,

making it difficult to distinguish between the "cynical" and "critical" (Wu & Wilkes, 2018), particularly because trust is often ill-defined (Fisher, 2016). Legitimacy, on the other hand, addresses the foundation of trust: the degree to which audiences find the existence and work practices of journalists and news media justified and worthwhile, and includes also additional dimensions such as perceived diversity of viewpoints and independence from other politics and commercial forces (Tong, 2018). This paper aims to take a first empirical step in studying perceived media legitimacy.

The research questions are: (a) How do various audience groups across Europe perceive the legitimacy of their country's news media, and which changes in media legitimacy have occurred between 2016 and 2023? (b) To what extent does political orientation affect perceived media legitimacy? (c) Which differences exist between citizens with various levels of SES in how they see media legitimacy over time?

Perceived media legitimacy is measured via a multidimensional indicator that asks respondents how they assess the trustworthiness, diversity of views and opinions, and independence from political and commercial pressures of their country's media. Seven Eurobarometer surveys between 2016 and 2023 are pooled to establish trends. SES is measured via occupational status, years of education, and social class. The effect of political orientation is estimated while controlling for political efficacy and life satisfaction, and country traits (GDP, media freedom). Multilevel analyses with random effects at country, time, and country-time levels (Schmidt-Catran & Fairbrother, 2016) is applied.

The first results show that there are no signs of decreasing media legitimacy in the EU countries, but countries differ according to GDP. Media legitimacy is lower among citizens with high SES. Political orientation shows negative associations of radical left-wing self-positioning and the refusing to answer category, but radical right-wing orientation has a small positive effect.

CDE03 Journalism, Media Legitimacy, and Democratic Transformations Across Contexts

PP 0188 Media-made polarization: Television news constructions of citizens activism and state authority in Pakistan

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The political climate in Pakistan following the ouster of the Prime Minister in April 2022 through a vote of no confidence, gave rise to intense political upheaval, represented as a contest between state power—represented by the military establishment, legislative, judiciary, and executive—and street power, in the form of mass mobilization, protests, and digital activism. Citizen activism has been interpreted in divergent ways. Some characterize it as a personality cult centered around populist leaders or an emotionally driven youth movement lacking political maturity. Others, however, view it as a manifestation of heightened political awareness and a transformative force heralding a 'New Pakistan.' These competing interpretations play a crucial role in shaping the discourse around citizen activism, influencing how its legitimacy is constructed and how it is positioned as a democratic right or represented as a threat to democratic order.

Considering these factors, this study critically examines how these contestations and power struggles are constructed through television news discourse. The study aims to: (i) analyze whether citizen activism is represented as a legitimate democratic expression or a threat to democracy (ii) examine whether the state's response is depicted as maintaining order or an oppressive force. The main research question of the study is: How do Pakistan television news media construct citizens' activism and the state's role in the democratic struggle for social justice? The sub- research questions examine (I) the rhetorical and textual elements used to frame state-citizen conflict, (ii) the journalistic techniques that influence this representation, and (iii) the power relationships and ideological stances represented in media narratives of resistance and governance.

This study is qualitative in nature, embedded in the social constructionist paradigm, that adopts a post-structuralist approach to analyze the contested meanings in media discourse. The study analyzes 9 p.m. prime time news bulletins as they predominantly reflect the editorial stance of news organizations. The corpus includes 100 news bulletins from Geo News and ARY News, two of Pakistan's most influential privately owned channels, with distinct editorial policies. In the selected period (April 2022- November 2022), Pakistan witnessed long marches, protests and political congregations where state enforcement agencies clashed with citizen resistance amid electoral controversies and crackdowns on dissent. This study employs Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (1992, 2003), which examines the relationship between linguistic elements, discourse context, and broader social structures. According to Fairclough (1992; 1995), the media has a critical role in promoting or opposing dominant narratives. The findings reveal that television constructions are increasingly partisan contributing to political polarization in the society. This research study is important because it demonstrates how the media shapes various realities of state power and citizen activism. In addition, it exposes societal division, a serious threat to the state-citizen relationship as envisioned by democratic theory.

CDE03 Journalism, Media Legitimacy, and Democratic Transformations Across Contexts

PP 0189 Key considerations for establishing new public service media institution(s): The (potential) case of Irish reunification

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Imagining public service media (PSM) for a newly constituted country is often purely speculative, offering scholars a chance to consider the fundamental purpose and relevance of PSM in a high-choice media age. However, in the case of Ireland, reevaluating what PSM looks like is less hypothetical: it is an increasingly urgent live issue requiring thoughtful and responsible planning. Shifting demographics, coupled with the post-Brexit context, has prompted active political debate regarding the prospect and implications of a reunified Ireland, which would reunite the six counties in Northern Ireland (a component of the UK since 1921) with the 26 counties in the South (a fully independent Republic since 1949).

Discussions around reunification have considered the practical implications of the institutional arrangements needed to facilitate such a new political dispensation. Ultimately, this paper considers how PSM might be organised in a reunified Ireland. This is currently constituted by the BBC in Northern Ireland (alongside the UK's commercial PSM providers) – where partition has left a British broadcaster operating in Ireland – and RTÉ and TG4 in the Republic of Ireland. We compare the existing overt and implied mission statements for existing PSM and postulates new institutional arrangements appropriate to a new "consociational democracy" (McGarry and O'Leary, 2006), a political unit constituted by a range of potentially antagonistic identities. PSM have long been identified as playing a key role in constructing and amplifying expressions of national identity. This is a nuanced task even in the context of relatively culturally homogenous national settings, but the challenge posed by the kind of consociational democracy envisaged in Ireland is significant (assuming it is possible at all). This article considers how any new PSM organisation would need to reflect an Ireland greatly changed in terms of economic development, ethnicity and social attitudes – while trying to operate within the norms of core PSM values.

The analysis explores six key areas: (i) the central purpose of PSM; (ii) conceiving PSM as an institution or as a network; (iii) the role of journalism and scripted/non-scripted content; (iv) governance, regulation and funding; (v) infrastructure, existing industries and staffing; (vi) digital products/services and relationships with third-party social media and streaming platforms.

The article considers how media in Ireland – as elsewhere – face a radically altered screen media market, characterised by intense commercial competition and where a plethora of distribution technologies have transformed the conditions in which audiences approach and use PSM content. A newly reunified Ireland would likely face severe pressure to move to a market-failure system: but here, we set out funding options for a new PSM, arguing for the implementation of a Finnish-style model. In so doing, we seek to project forward to the middle of the 21st century, to consider the likely nature of the relationship between technology, screen media markets, culture and identity in a society constituted by historically opposed communities.

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CDE04 AI Response-Ability

PN 18 Reclaiming response-ability: Feminist perspectives on AI in the digital welfare state

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The datafied welfare state increasingly relies on automated systems to manage services and govern interactions with citizens, reshaping how welfare professionals and citizens exercise agency and judgment. These shifts can be understood as a redistribution of response-ability within welfare encounters, that is, the capacity to recognize needs or problems and respond. Existing work on digital state transformation has begun to conceptualize responsiveness as an organisational or institutional capability (e.g., Papazu, Wang, Perriam, and Marttila, 2025), using response-ability to capture complex, multi-dimensional state performance. What remains under-theorized, however, is how response-ability operates as a distributed and contested relation across human actors, AI systems, and institutions. This paper develops a theoretical framework of response-ability within critical data and communication studies. Drawing on the work of Barad (2007), Haraway (2016), Tronto (2020) and others, it reclaims response-ability as a thick feminist concept shaped by power asymmetries, highlighting how obligations to respond and forms of vulnerability are unevenly allocated and redistributed within socio-technical relations. The argument is illustrated through the case of AI-mediated risk prediction in reproductive healthcare (e.g., preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, and preterm birth). In these settings, algorithmic systems harness large-scale health records and real-time monitoring to identify "high-risk" pregnancies and trigger standardized clinical protocols. Such systems hold promise for improved maternal-fetal outcomes (Wong et al., 2024). Yet, even when framed as supportive or preventive, such systems reconfigure professional judgment, patient experiences of care and surveillance, and institutional

accountability. Furthermore, their impact on health equity remains contested, with scholars warning that AI can either bridge or widen maternal health inequities, depending on how it is designed, governed, and implemented (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020; Laguitan & Bernardino, 2025).Applying a thick notion of AI response-ability to the welfare state, this paper examines who is positioned to recognize needs, who is tasked with responding when systems fail, and how AI-mediated processes can intensify or mitigate vulnerabilities. Rather than treating AI as inherently corrosive or emancipatory, the paper shows how new forms of attentiveness, coordination, and early intervention may arise alongside harms and lapses in responsibility. Building on Haraway's claim that "the details link actual beings to actual response abilities" (Haraway 2016), I argue that specific design choices, procedural norms, and everyday practices shape responsiveness and accountability. The key question, then, is under what conditions AI mediated arrangements enable more responsive and equitable care in welfare systems, with clear implications for vulnerability, rights, and the distribution of care.

CDE04 AI Response-Ability

PN 19 Cultivating resonance-ability in the age of AI

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This paper extends the panel's focus on AI response-ability by theorizing a complementary notion of resonance-ability: the capacity to be touched, marked, and transformed by encounters with the world, while also learning what not to let resonate. Drawing on Hartmut Rosa's sociology of resonance, we argue that meaningful human agency in AI-saturated environments requires not only the ability to respond to and care for the consequences of AI, but also enabling an openness to experiences that cannot be fully controlled or predicted. Rosa's (2019) idea of resonance describes a mode of being in the world that is open and transformative, in contrast to an instrumental mode where the world is treated as a mute object for optimization and resource accumulation. LLMs and other AI systems are designed and typically used to deliver fast, efficient outputs, often at the cost of friction, surprise, and the kind of struggle that shapes a self. In such a context, Rosa's concept reminds us that human flourishing depends not only on being able to act and respond, but on being able to be touched by the world in ways that leave a mark and transform us. Heavy reliance on a LLM like ChatGPT can produce polished outputs without the cognitive and affective friction that shapes a self, fostering a kind of "metacognitive laziness" (Georgiou, 2025) where thinking is offloaded and the self is no longer shaped by the struggle of writing and reasoning. A student who lets every AI suggestion overwrite their own voice risks living an "unmarked life," where they no longer show up in the world in a way that allows them to be changed by it. Such examples show the necessity of cultivating resonance, which includes resilience towards what should not be resonant and kept at a distance. We develop this argument by combining Rosa's theory with feminist perspectives on response-ability and (non)care (Haraway, 2020; Yao, 2021). Empirically, we draw on two case studies: ethnographic work in the health sector on how medical experts negotiate reliance on AI in diagnostics, and qualitative interviews with teenagers about their everyday uses of AI, especially ChatGPT in educational settings. These cases allow us to explore how resonance-ability is cultivated (or eroded) in different institutional contexts, and how people learn to distinguish between what they want to be touched by and what they want to keep at a distance. The paper concludes by outlining resonance-ability as a normative ideal for human flourishing in the age of AI: the ability to respond, but also to be touched, to be marked, and transformed because of showing up in the world in a non-instrumental way.

CDE04 AI Response-Ability

PN 20 Civil Society at the table: AI, gender, and accountability expectations in Europe

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The paper, which emerges from the EU Horizon-funded project [Anonymised], examines the perspectives of EU civil society organisations (CSOs) on artificial intelligence (AI) in general and on gender-related bias in particular. Referring to the Sociology of Expectations (SoE), it posits that technologies do not emerge in a vacuum but are shaped by social forces, including the values, beliefs, interests, and power dynamics of the stakeholders involved in their development and deployment. Furthermore, the present study seeks to expand SoE by engaging with stakeholders that are not actively developing new technologies (this is the main focus of SoE) but are engaged with its societal impact. Since technologies are imbued with meaning through social processes, their development and adoption are influenced by the interests of specific stakeholder groups, policymaker agendas, and the competitors' strategies. In this framing, the study explores existing CSO strategies, practices and partnerships aimed at addressing AI-related gender bias and empowering gender-vulnerable communities, while identifying the structural barriers that constrain these efforts. Within this framework, CSOs are conceptualised as key instruments of democratic accountability, with the potential to contribute meaningfully to AI governance in accordance with EU values and principles. At the same time, CSOs occupy a privileged position that enables direct engagement with gender-vulnerable communities and the articulation of their concerns regarding instances of algorithmic discrimination. To address the study's research questions, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining qualitative data from participatory workshops with quantitative data collected through an online survey. The target sample consisted

of CSO workers and activists, who were invited to reflect on AI-related risks and benefits, engage with recent European regulatory initiatives such as the EU AI Act, and describe organisational activities undertaken to address AI-related gender bias. The findings show that CSO staff and activists are increasingly concerned about AI overall, and especially about its implications for gender equality. They are eager to increase their engagement and advocacy on the issue, but they face growing obstacles, including limited resources, insufficient organisational focus on emerging technologies, and a sense of exclusion from official AI policy deliberation. Their responses are indicative of a broader trend during a time of crisis for civil society where its input into the current AI summer would be particularly valuable for gendered perspectives.

CDE04 AI Response-Ability

PN 21 Chatting with the public Agency: How citizens negotiate public values of public sector chatbots

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In March 2025, the Wired broke the news that the initiative Department of Government Efficiency with the senior government advisor Elon Musk as one of its key people introduced a custom-made chatbot to meet the proposed cuts in the public sector and increase efficiency. According to Forbes, government employees are supposed to use the chatbot to draft emails and talking points, summarize text, and write code (Fortune, 2025). Beyond the internal use of chatbots for government efficiency, communicative artificial intelligence (AI), such as chatbots, has increasingly become a mundane part of interactions with citizens. However, it remains difficult to estimate the extent of chatbot use. A 2020 report by AI Watch (Misuraca & van Noordt, 2020) noted that the dominant form of automated and AI-based systems deployed in the public sector are actually chatbots compared to less prominent forms such as automated profiling of citizens. Municipalities and public agencies across Europe are increasingly integrating chatbots into their digital services and websites. Often, these chatbots are based on databases filled with potential search terms that are matched with appropriate answers. Although some solutions have the potential to integrate large language models (LLMs), most chatbots currently in use in the public sector are static solutions. Generally, chatbots have become a mundane encounter for internet users as they are broadly implemented by commercial actors. In this presentation, we explore the mediation of public sector communication with citizens through chatbots. The aim is to question the notion of chatbots being simple technical solutions to challenges in the public sector including accessibility and resources to meet demands by the citizens. Instead, they trigger negotiations of public and individual values that need scholarly attention. Theoretically, we draw on public value theory, and empirically, we establish a citizens' perspective with focus group discussions that include elements of data dreaming as a method. In 10 focus groups, we discussed what people think, value, and disvalue about chatbots used by public entities. Our findings indicate that the research participants emphasized public values traditionally connected with a strong welfare state, namely universal access, equality, and equity in connection with technical aspects such as functionality and intuitive design.

CDE04 AI Response-Ability

PN 22 How to build responsible AI? The case of the technology nucleus of the Homeless Workers' Movement (NT-MTST)

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Big tech companies increasingly deploy AI systems to enhance efficiency and profitability. These technologies are not merely technical or strategic tools, but also moral ones, insofar as they embed specific values, norms, and "scripts" into digital infrastructures that shape and discipline user behaviour. A paradigmatic example is the "system prompt" embedded in large language models such as ChatGPT or Claude (dbreunig 2025), which continuously governs how these systems respond, the tone they adopt, and the information they may withhold. Such "moral affordances" are not neutral: they reflect the moral economies of their creators, often grounded in a neoliberal ethos privileging competition, meritocracy, and individual performance. More broadly, commercial digital platforms discipline users and platform workers through algorithmic moderation practices, design choices such as gamification, and performance metrics that reward compliant behaviour while sanctioning deviation through forms of exclusion or de-platforming. From this perspective, technology companies tend to define "responsible" uses of AI as those aligned with their own moral economies (Bonini & Treré 2024). However, what counts as responsible technology is highly contested. Uses deemed responsible by designers may be experienced as harmful or unjust by users and workers—for instance, when algorithmic management fails to guarantee economic survival or incentivises unsafe working practices. Concluding the panel, and returning to the notion of response-ability, in this paper, we propose a slightly different definition of "response-ability", not simply linked to the assessment of AI's consequences but to as a collective process through which users and workers actively participate in the production, governance, and re-definition of AI technologies. Empirically, the paper draws on qualitative fieldwork conducted between May and November 2024 among members of the Technology Nucleus of the Homeless Workers' Movement (NT-MTST) in São Paulo, Brazil. Through observations, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of key initiatives, we show how the movement not only

adopts AI-driven technologies but actively reconfigures their architectures, uses, and meanings in line with collective values and the concrete demands of popular struggles. Particular attention is devoted to the Contrate Quem Luta (Hire Those Who Struggle) platform and to the development of cooperative delivery platforms governed by alternative algorithmic logics based on solidarity, collective responsibility, and democratic control. By analysing these practices as forms of popular technopolitics, the paper contributes to debates on responsible AI by foregrounding technology as a terrain of ethical and political struggle, in which responsibility is co-produced through collective action rather than imposed from above.

CDE05 Truth, Information Integrity, and Media Contestation in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0295 Truth under scrutiny: Fact-checking and credibility in Portuguese televised election debates

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In a post-truth context characterized by the rapid spread of information disorders through digital networks, fact-checking has emerged as a key resource for combating disinformation and uncertainty. Whether the aim is to promote media and information literacy across different domains or to stand out within a media ecosystem in which journalism must regain credibility and public relevance by strengthening trust in news brands, understanding the mechanisms that foster citizens' trust in the media is particularly important. In this context, fact-checking plays a dual role: it helps reinforce journalistic authority while simultaneously subjecting political discourse to heightened public scrutiny.

The period of televised debates between candidates in the run-up to Portugal's early legislative elections, held on 18 May 2025, constitutes a particularly relevant moment for examining fact-checking practices and their relationship with democratic processes.

This study aims to analyze the fact-checking segments produced by SIC Notícias (a private 24-hour news television channel) in collaboration with Polígrafo, Portugal's first fact-checking organization, following the 28 televised debates between the leaders of the political parties contesting the elections. The debates were broadcast by Portugal's main television channels (RTP, SIC, and TVI). Notably, SIC Notícias conducted fact-checking after every debate, including those aired by competing broadcasters. In these segments, statements made by candidates were assessed through a rapid verification process carried out under significant time constraints.

Using content analysis, this study examines how fact-checking is constructed within television news coverage during a period of heightened political relevance, with particular attention to editorial criteria, strategies of legitimization, and the role of time in the verification process. In addition, interviews will be conducted with the editor responsible for selecting the candidates' statements to be fact-checked, as well as with the fact-checkers themselves. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how fact-checking practices shape perceptions of credibility and legitimacy—both by reinforcing journalists' professional authority and by influencing public evaluations of political actors and their claims. More broadly, this study seeks to critically examine the central role of fact-checking as a democratic practice and its significance for informed citizenship, political accountability, and the quality of public debate in contemporary democracies.

CDE05 Truth, Information Integrity, and Media Contestation in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0296 Negotiated truth: Poly-perspectival media sources in the coverage of Gaza's Al Shifa hospital siege

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Media coverage of the war on Gaza has long been politically contested, especially since Israeli authorities have refused to grant foreign journalists independent access on the ground since October 2023 (CPJ 2025). Embedded power structures within political and media institutions have sought to suppress the release of information (Jones2025), constraining how news about the conflict is produced and verified (Melamed 2025). This has created a predominance of information coming from Israeli government sources (Al-Najjar and Zaid 2025), which can shape the framing and tone of Gaza coverage, and influencing how society interprets events (Gonen 2018).

Under these conditions of limited access, new actors adopting new techniques negotiate the reliability of sources. While Gaza has become the deadliest place for journalists in the world (OHCHR 2023), local reporters continue to document the war, using phones and social media as their only channels of communication. Their work is part of a broader group of individual news creators recording and sharing live footage as a form of real-time, unfiltered evidence (Kavada & Treré 2020; Bjerknes 2022), as well as open-source investigators who verify and geolocate the origin of material (Dodds et al. 2025). Together, these actors create a "poly-perspectival assemblage of truth" (Fuller & Weizman 2021), where different forms of eye witnessing and verification fill the blank spots left by traditional media coverage. This paper analyses the siege of the Al Shifa Hospital in November 2023 as a paradigmatic case study (Flyvbjerg 2016). It takes one of the conflict's most contested events, marked by fabricated footage and disputed information (Borger 2023), to investigate

the conflicting and complementary news sourcing practices of international media outlets, on-the-ground reporters and content creators, and open-source investigators.

News sourcing practices are shaped by assumptions about power and authority and tend to privilege elite voices in the media (Hermida et al. 2014) and "authorised knowers" (Edy et al. 2024). Therefore, this study explores the role of alternative actors who may challenge these prevailing narratives. The paper examines and compares how journalists, content creators, and OSINT investigators substantiate their truth claims under conditions of restricted international access and polarised narratives. Itexamines sources used in the coverage by traditional outlets (BBC, Al Jazeera, The Guardian), on-the-ground reporters and content creators (Bisan Owda, Motaz Azaiza, Abdallah Alattar), and OSINT investigators (Forensic Architecture, Bellingcat) to understand how truth claims by non-elite, non-authorised knowers inform the politically contested discursive space of Gaza war coverage.

The paper draws on the concepts of the hybrid media system (Chadwick 2017), counterpublics (Kavada and Poell 2021), "strategic witnessing" (Ristovska 2016) and poly-perspectival truth (Fuller & Weizman 2021) to interpret how institutionalised and new sourcing practices intersect. The study reveals how digital content creation and open-source investigation can be used as alternative and complementary ways to document war and call for accountability (Charlton et al. 2024). The research highlights how the targeting of journalists and suppression of independent reporting create severe distortions in how the Gaza conflict is documented, posing fundamental risks to media and democracy.

CDE05 Truth, Information Integrity, and Media Contestation in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0297 How the Brussels Effect channels information integrity policies in Latin America

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This paper examines how European Union regulatory frameworks—particularly the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Services Act (DSA), and EU-led information integrity instruments—have influenced data protection and disinformation governance policies in Latin America (LA). Grounded in debates on regulatory diffusion and the Brussels Effect, the study assesses the scope and limits of EU normative power in shaping communication-related policies beyond Europe, with particular attention to democratic resilience and information integrity. The research contributes to communication policy scholarship by moving beyond formal legal convergence and examining how EU-inspired models are adapted, hybridized, and operationalized in specific media and political contexts.

The study combines qualitative document analysis of data protection laws, platform regulation bills, and policy papers with semi-structured interviews conducted with legislators, policy experts, regulators, and journalists across selected Latin American countries. This design allows for a comparative assessment of both regulatory approximation and contextual mediation. The findings indicate that EU norms strongly influence regulatory design, especially regarding the framing of data protection as a fundamental right, transparency obligations for platforms, algorithmic accountability, and content moderation mechanisms. Brazil's General Law on the Protection of Personal Data (LGPD), alongside reforms in Mexico, Chile, Argentina, and Colombia, illustrates how GDPR principles and institutional architectures have been replicated to facilitate cross-border data flows and pursue EU adequacy status (Carrillo & Jackson, 2022; Boshe & Caride, 2024).

Existing scholarship shows that stakeholders in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico, and Peru increasingly recognize EU law as the primary normative reference for personal data protection, outweighing U.S. influence and reshaping debates on digital rights and public policy in the region (Veronese et al., 2023). A similar dynamic is observable in the field of information integrity. As generative artificial intelligence accelerates the scale and sophistication of information manipulation, Latin American governments have turned to regulatory frameworks oriented toward safeguarding fundamental values such as freedom of expression, human rights, and democratic participation.

Comparative analyses of DSA-inspired legislative proposals reveal an emerging regulatory modeling process around EU platform governance rules (Mama & Ugarte, 2025). However, empirical evidence suggests Latin American policies are not mere transplants. Instead, they constitute hybrid regulatory models that combine EU templates with local political priorities, including election integrity, protection of democracy, and regulation of messaging applications, alongside elements from other regulatory traditions (Da Nóbrega & Ratier, 2025). The EU's Code of Practice on Disinformation and its incorporation into the DSA framework as a Code of Conduct in 2025 have further amplified this influence, particularly following the endorsement of the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online by Latin American countries in 2024.

The paper addresses two key knowledge gaps: first, the limited empirical analysis of how EU-inspired regulations affect disinformation dynamics, media pluralism, and the protection of user rights in practice; and second, the under-theorization of cultural and political specificities—such as high media concentration, media trust, and democratic backsliding—in discussions of the Brussels Effect. By foregrounding these dimensions, the study contributes to ECREA debates on communication law, digital governance, and the future of democratic information ecosystems.

CDE05 Truth, Information Integrity, and Media Contestation in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0298 The crisis of accountability and media counter-discourse: Algorithms and civic resistance in Romania (2024–2025)

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The November 2024 Romanian presidential elections were marked by the unexpected success of Călin Georgescu, a candidate virtually unknown in the traditional public sphere. Georgescu's victory signifies a transition from the "logic of collective action" (centered on parties and ideologies) to the logic of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). In this model, political participation is no longer mediated by formal structures but by digital platforms that facilitate self-organization through "underground naming practices." Supporters formed a community based on a fluid yet radical identity, transforming TikTok into a space of symbolic resistance against "The System." This mode of participation eluded traditional political gatekeeping, offering an illusion of direct democracy under the guise of digital messianism. Georgescu's campaign thrived on these connective forms of activism, where digital platforms allowed marginalized groups to bypass traditional party mediation. Supporters utilized "underground naming practices" (Williamson, 1974), ritualistically designating him as the "Messiah." This reflects Bourdieu's (1991) theory on naming as a tool for creating a new social reality. By airing the "dirty laundry" (Herzfeld, 2006) of the elite, the discourse forged a radical intersection of democracy and identity, pitting an autarkic, "Dacian" descent against a pro-European status quo. This created an "Identity-Us" (Elias, 1991) that prioritized collective belief over individual critical logic. The initial failure of state institutions underscores a crisis of democratic accountability in the face of algorithmic governance. Social platform algorithms functioned as autonomous political actors, promoting "magical thinking" and autarkic solutions without any form of public oversight or financial transparency. This opacity created a "responsibility vacuum," where electoral success was achieved through the manipulation of information flows, pushing the boundaries of electoral legislation that was unprepared for "zero-cost" campaigns with massive viral impact. In this context, the independent mainstream media assumed the role of the core of civic resistance. The "Media Reply" was not merely a journalistic act but a vital democratic intervention that dismantled the candidate's identity construction. Through investigations into falsified biographies and obscure connections, the press transformed "revelation" into verifiable reality, providing the public with the cognitive tools necessary to escape the aura of magical thinking. This civic pressure served as the catalyst that forced political institutions to move from passivity to action. To decode this "common code" of naming, the study employs a qualitative analysis of primary sources (media articles, TV broadcasts, and social media posts) from the determined period. The analysis is bolstered by interdisciplinary interviews with specialists in media, AI and NLP, cognitive psychology, and sociology/history. As a researcher, I operated from an insider positionality, leveraging my career as a journalist to ensure high-level access and trust. While this status introduced inherent subjectivity, it was counterbalanced by selecting interviewees with diverse civic involvement. The study is delimited to the "progressive" academic and media spheres of Bucharest, focusing on participants aged 40–60 from the middle class. The 2024–2025 case demonstrates that, in the absence of transparent digital governance, civic resistance through the media remains the final barrier against algorithmic populism.

CDE05 Truth, Information Integrity, and Media Contestation in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0299 The construction of the world in FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) discourse – Analysis using the corpus-assisted discourse studies method

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The FIMI (Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference) category has recently replaced the disinformation category as a more precise one, as it is based on the attribution of the analyzed messages. In the case of the Polish socio-political reality, FIMI consists of messages inspired mainly by Russian actors. The presented analysis will refer to the construct of reality (the linguistic image of the world, Bartmiński 2009) and discourses (Foucault, 2002) updated in texts from several websites constituting the so-called alternative source of information in Poland. The analysis will be based on an extensive corpus of over 75,000 original texts obtained from the aforementioned websites, which the fact-checking organizations identified as being inspired by Russian disinformation activities.

The analysis of this corpus will be conducted using corpus-assisted discourse studies methods. In the first phase, key words, collocations and topics will be presented, which have been reconstructed using computer-assisted language analysis methods (Clarin-pl software). The analysis will refer to the structural and semantic features of the vocabulary used in the analyzed corpus. In addition to semantic fields, the presence of specific parts of speech and their grammatical forms will also be examined (especially nouns, verbs, and adjectives), as well as the occurrence of special vocabulary, such as emotionalisms, diminutives, augmentatives, and proper names.

In the second part, data obtained using quantitative methods will be subjected to qualitative analysis in the context of the question of the dominant worldview and discourses actualized in the discursive practices (understood as texts) included in the corpus.

In the context of discursive analysis, questions will be raised concerning (Warnke & Spitzmüller, 2008):

Transtextual layer

- Intertextuality
- Frames, topoi
- Discourse-semantic protofigures
- Social symbolism
- Indexicality
- Historicity
- Ideology/mentality
- General political and social debates

Actors (agents)

- Recipient roles
- Production (author) roles
- Social stratification, power
- Discourse communities
- Ideology brokers
- Voice (s)
- Verticality
- Patterns of action
- Forms of communication

Intratextual layer

- Metaphorical fields
- Lexical fields
- Isotopical and oppositional lines
- Topic development
- Text functions
- Text type
- Syntactic patterns
- Rhetorical tropes and figures
- Metaphorical lexemes
- Deontic meaning

The analysis, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, allows us to reconstruct the dominant linguistic image of the world (the construction of social reality, Berger & Luckmann, 1991) and the main updated discourses in discursive practices such as FIMI.

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CDE06 AI, Democracy, and the Transformation of Political Communication

PP 0305 Artificial representation? Citizens' perceptions and evaluations of the use of generative AI in politics

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Generative AI has rapidly become embedded in a wide range of communication professions. Tools based on large language models (LLMs) are increasingly used to draft texts, summarize information, and tailor messages to audiences, reshaping how content is produced and perceived. Most recent research in political communication has focused on the use of generative AI in the news media and journalism (see for example Kieslich, et al., 2025; Nihal & Diakopoulos, 2025; Strikovic & Cools, 2025).

Although research on the use of generative AI in political processes remains limited, the topic is increasingly attracting media attention. Most recently, the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson received stark criticism for accusations about using generative AI in his official work (Bryant, 2025). This suggests that the adoption of generative AI by political actors may raise distinct normative concerns. Unlike other communications contexts, political communication is closely tied to

democratic representation and responsiveness. Research on political representation emphasizes that citizens' sense of being represented depends not only on substantive policy congruence but also on communicative signals that point to politicians acting on behalf of citizens and their needs (Page & Shapiro, 1983; Haversian, 2010; Aarts & Thomassen, 2008). The perceived outsourcing of communicative or decision-making tasks to AI systems may therefore challenge citizens' expectations of how representation should be enacted.

Overarching RQ: How do citizens perceive the extent to which generative AI is used in political processes, and how acceptable do they find this perceived use?

Methodology

We analyse data from a representative survey of German citizens (N = 1120) collected in January 2026, stratified by age, education, gender, and region. Participants are given a list of 16 possible uses of generative AI within the political process (such as using generative AI "*... to draft press releases, newsletters, or official statements*" or "*... to prepare for interviews, debates or public discussions by generating possible arguments and responses*") and are asked (a) how frequently they think politicians use generative AI to perform the tasks and (b) how acceptable they (would) find the use of generative AI for the tasks.

First insights

Preliminary findings reveal a pronounced perception gap: respondents perceive that politicians use generative AI frequently, yet they consider such use largely unacceptable.

These results suggest that even limited or symbolic uses of generative AI by political elites may undermine perceived democratic responsiveness if citizens believe that core representative functions are being delegated to AI systems rather than grounded in human judgment and citizen needs.

Discussion

The study contributes to emerging research on AI in politics by highlighting the importance of public perceptions (and misperceptions) in shaping democratic satisfaction in an era of synthetic communication. It also lays the groundwork for a broader research agenda, as we plan to survey politicians using the same questions to assess not only potential gaps between citizens' perceptions and actual political practices with regards to the use of generative AI, but also divergences between citizens' and politicians' normative evaluations of generative AI use in political processes.

CDE06 AI, Democracy, and the Transformation of Political Communication

PP 0306 Politics of Boom and Doom: Exploring the politicization of AI in the Netherlands

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly presented as a transformative force reshaping economies, governance, and everyday life. Yet public and political debates about AI often oscillate between exaggerated promises and abstract fears, obscuring concrete societal challenges related to power, governance, and public values. This study critically examines how AI has been politicized in Dutch public discourse over the period 2015–2025, asking how dominant narratives about AI relate to the actual challenges identified in debates on democratic AI governance. Central to the analysis is the growing mismatch between AI "hype" and the social, ethical, and institutional realities of AI deployment.

Drawing on the concept of sociotechnical imaginaries—understood as collectively held and publicly performed visions of desirable futures shaped by science and technology—the study analyses how AI is imagined, framed, and contested across media arenas. Empirically, the research combines intermedial and multimodal analysis of more than 14,000 texts, including news articles, LinkedIn social media posts, parliamentary documents, political party programmes, and corporate blogs in the Dutch context. Methodologically, it adopts a mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative-computational approaches (topic modelling, actor and frame detection, temporal trend analysis) with close, qualitative analysis of selected texts and visuals to capture both large-scale patterns and discursive nuance.

The findings show that the Dutch AI discourse is structured around a dominant, economics- and business-centred "master frame." Across media types, AI is frequently presented as revolutionary and inevitable, as efficient, objective, and accurate, and as a key driver of economic growth and international competitiveness. Narratives of a global "AI race" position technological adoption as a geopolitical necessity, while more extreme framings oscillate between techno-optimist promises of societal progress and existential risk narratives portraying AI as a threat to humanity. These imaginaries are most prominently articulated by actors from the technology sector, whose commercial and political interests strongly shape public understandings of AI.

While news media cover a broader range of themes than political or corporate communication—including social effects and ethical concerns—risks are often discussed in abstract terms and rarely connected to concrete governance challenges such as data bias, embedded assumptions in algorithmic design, or the social consequences of automated classification. Political

debates engage with fewer AI topics overall and tend to prioritise economic growth, though significant differences emerge between parties. Right-wing populist and nationalist actors frame AI as a tool for democratic disruption or as leverage against EU-level regulation, while libertarian and tech-aligned actors emphasise deregulation and innovation freedom.

Social media function as a space where AI imaginaries are contested, yet techno-optimist narratives remain dominant. Overall, the study demonstrates how the dominance of commercially driven AI imaginaries narrows the range of publicly visible futures, marginalising alternative conceptions of AI grounded in public values such as fairness, accountability, and transparency. By systematically comparing media and political discourse with established governance challenges, the study highlights the democratic implications of AI hype and underscores the need for more pluralistic,value-driven public debates on AI.

CDE06 AI, Democracy, and the Transformation of Political Communication

PP 0307 From digital savvy to democratic responsibility: How young citizens engage with AI

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Citizens primarily develop their understanding of AI through personal experience and media representations. International research (Kong, Cheung, and Zhang 2022; Chan and Hu 2023; Ng et al. 2023; Mansoor et al. 2024; Walter 2024; Wang et al. 2025; Humburg et al. 2024) reveals a nuanced picture of young people's perceptions and uses of AI. Oblak Črnič (2020) differentiates between teachable, competent, and vulnerable youth, emphasizing that no single category adequately captures their complex relationship with technology. Although popular labels such as "digital natives" (Prensky, 2001), the "networked generation" (Tapscott, 1998; Rheingold, 2012), and the "app generation" (Gardner and Davis, 2013) have long portrayed youth as technologically adept, empirical studies highlight a persistent gap between perceived and actual digital competence (Hargittai, 2010; Kirschner and van Merriënboer, 2013; Porat, Blau, and Barak, 2018; Oblak Črnič, 2025).

Youth tend to exhibit greater familiarity with digital technologies, largely due to their psychological flexibility and adaptability (Nikolenko & Astapenko, 2023). Consequently, they are not merely users but active co-creators of digital media and technologies (Vartiainen et al., 2025). However, AI-driven decision-making, which promises "instant optimal solutions to complex problems" (Konig, 2023), risks diminishing pluralistic deliberation and may undermine the integration of diverse perspectives essential for democratic governance. Against this backdrop, this study examines how young citizens engage with AI critically and responsibly, and how such engagement manifests in practice. To explore these questions, we draw on extensive nationally representative data, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. The survey includes 1,488 high school students and 545 young adults, while 41 Slovenian participants aged 16–24 contributed to the focus groups.

Our findings suggest that the initially cautious, sceptical, and experimental engagement with AI has evolved into a more deliberate and purposeful use, particularly among youth identified as "first" (Oblak & Brečko, 2025) or "emerging citizens" (Oblak, 2023), who actively reflect on the ethical and social implications of AI. The data further reveal a considerable degree of critical reflection on AI among young people, although patterns of appropriation remain uneven, especially among different socioeconomic groups.

With the findings, we want to underscore the need for targeted educational strategies that foster equitable digital empowerment and critical AI literacy among youth. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in everyday life, ensuring that young citizens can engage responsibly and reflectively is essential for their personal agency as also for the resilience of democratic societies. By situating youth AI practices within the broader context of democratic participation, this study contributes to understanding the interplay between emerging technologies and civic engagement, especially among younger citizens.

CDE06 AI, Democracy, and the Transformation of Political Communication

PP 0308 Identifying challenges and opportunities for AI chatbot implementation in the public sector

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Chatbots that employ generative artificial intelligence (AI) are spreading rapidly: In Germany, 4 out of 10 internet users (Reiss et al., 2025) and in Denmark, 8 out of 10 students (Skovgaard Thomsen, 2024) are using them. As large language models become "normal technology" (Narayan & Kapoor, 2025) to support human work, local and national government institutions have started implementing such chatbots in public administration (Bright, 2025). The envisioned aim is to optimize administrative processes and enable faster service to citizens (Mergel et al., 2023). However, the empirical basis for these expected benefits remains unclear. This paper addresses this gap by providing a systematic literature review of the implementation, uses, and attitudes towards generative AI-based chatbots in the public sector. It draws on 54 empirical studies that were identified following the PRISMA (2020) guideline and that were published across disciplines since autumn 2022, i.e., since ChatGPT was made available to a wider public. The data is analysed through a combination of automated and manual coding.

Our analysis suggests that implementing chatbots in public administration carries potentials as well as challenges. For instance, chatbots can automate repetitive tasks, such as form completion and multilingual communication (Abdenebaoui et al., 2024; Millan-Vargas et al., 2024). While this can entail efficiency gains, workloads can also increase due to unresolved citizen inquiries shifting to alternative channels or rebound effects from heightened service expectations (Hemesath & Tepe, 2024; Chen & Gasco-Hernandez, 2024). Additionally, the adoption of generative AI introduces new tasks, including system maintenance, data quality assurance, and model training, emphasizing the need for organizational readiness and continuous skill development (Kaun & Männiste, 2025). While chatbots improve access to simple, time-sensitive public information, they are less suited for complex or critical inquiries, where citizens often prefer human interaction (Følstad and Bjerkreim-Hanssen; 2023; Maragno et al., 2023; Ruiz and Reascos-Paredes, 2024). Errors in chatbot responses can create additional challenges, hence undermining public trust and potentially exacerbating social inequalities (Jo et al., 2025). Citizens also express high expectations regarding data security, transparency, and accountability in AI-driven public services (Bao et al., 2025). People's digital literacy and trust in these technologies play a central role in use, but are not distributed equally: younger, resourceful citizens exhibit greater confidence in chatbots, whereas vulnerable groups experience heightened barriers (Larsen & Følstad, 2024).

Taken together, our study identifies three key strategic challenges regarding chatbot implementation in the public sector: (1) enabling organizational restructuring in terms of rethinking divisions of labour, staff competencies, and the distribution of roles and departmental responsibilities, (2) preserving trust in the welfare state as digitalization reduces human interaction, and (3) ensuring digital inclusion and equitable access to public services. Hence, this review provides a consolidated, cross-disciplinary synthesis of recent empirical evidence on potentials and challenges regarding the implementation of chatbots in the public sector. By clarifying where chatbots demonstrate reliable value and where they generate new forms of complexity it informs policy discussions around the implementation of generative AI and furthers the understanding of its democratic consequences.

CDE06 AI, Democracy, and the Transformation of Political Communication

PP 0309 Will democratic communication remain human-produced? Generative and agentic AI in post-digital Europe

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This paper analyses the evolving relationship between public communication and democracy at the EU level through the lens of emerging socio-technical transformations driven by artificial intelligence, with particular focus on generative and agentic forms. It argues that the increasing institutional deployment of chatbots, conversational systems designed to perform communicative and informational tasks traditionally carried out by humans, thereby enhancing the perceived accessibility and responsiveness of public authorities, together with the accelerating interest in agentic AI and growing debates surrounding the agentic state, signals a structural shift in how governance is conceived, enacted and projected into the future. This shift is situated within a post-digital paradigm, in which "post-" denotes not the end of the digital era, but a new developmental phase characterised by intensified and qualitatively novel patterns of human–machine interaction (Pane, 2025). Within this paradigm, artificial sociality and quasi-otherness, enabled by AI-mediated interfaces, reshape communicative dynamics between institutions and citizens, reconfiguring expectations of participation, authority and legitimacy (Natale & Depounti, 2024). The paper contends that these developments necessitate a fundamental reconsideration of the communicative foundations of democracy and conceptualises generative and agentic AI along a continuum spanning AI as a tool to AI as a quasi-other capable of exercising delegated agency, prompting questions of empowerment, human over-shift, responsibility gaps and the trustworthiness of machine-mediated interventions in public life.

Empirically, the paper draws on a qualitative interview set (n = 10) involving experts in European democracy and public communication. The findings show that communicative practices, rather than technological capacity alone, mediate both the democratic risks and opportunities associated with the emergence of agentic AI systems. The interviews further illuminate how institutional chatbot deployment and the current experimentation with agentic AI are transforming the European public sphere, where AI-mediated interaction increasingly disrupts the Habermasian model of communicative rationality traditionally invoked as the normative foundation of democratic deliberation (Habermas, 1996). The analysis highlights tensions between artificial agency and human accountability, including concerns regarding over-reliance, opacity and shifting expectations of trust in hybrid human-AI communicative environments (Floridi, 2025). While these systems perform communicative tasks that resemble human action, they do not generate autonomous knowledge nor do they originate moral values, which marks a clear boundary between human agency and artificial output. These dynamics are interpreted as characteristic expressions of post-digitality, in which public communication becomes hybrid, contested and partially populated by artificial quasi-actors, creating both new democratic opportunities and new vulnerabilities for legitimacy, trust and the integrity of institutional authority.

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CDE07 Platformed Democracies: Mediation, Participation, and the Struggle over Democratic Meaning

PP 0411 Democracy dies in dazzlement

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Against the mantra "democracy dies in darkness," this paper argues that in Western democracies with a rising far right, it is not darkness but a surfeit of light that threatens democracy. It is the excess of light brought by a bipolar public sphere, a cable news landscape starkly divided into a polarized duopoly, and histrionic, "horse-race" media coverage of public affairs. To elaborate this argument, this paper articulates Guy Debord with the post-colonial criticism of the Congolese Gabonese critic Joseph Tonda.

Tonda's notion of "postcolonial imperialism," centered on "dazzlement," offers new ways of understanding the crisis of democracy, because it enables a disassociation between "light" and "good," and between "fire" and "bad." It upends the Enlightenment's fetishization of light as enlightened rationality and banishment of fire as the retrograde domain of superstition and violence and offers a novel approach to the crisis of democracy, with Trump's US as case-study, torn apart by chauvinism and sexism.[1]

"Dazzlement" captures the nature of the threat to democracy. Debord theorized the becoming-image of all social relations under capitalism, opening *La société du spectacle* with the assertion that "the entire life" of modern societies "is turning into an immense accumulation of *spectacles*."[2] A system in which images mediate human relations, "spectacle is the affirmation of appearances and the affirmation of all … life, as mere appearance."[3]

A truly *global* phenomenon, spectacle comes in two types: in *concentrated* spectacle, political power is centralized, and the production and consumption of commodities is less developed than in *diffuse*spectacle, which perfuses advanced consumer societies. Autocracy spurs concentrated spectacle; capitalism spawns diffuse spectacular societies. Between the publication of *La Société du Spectacle* in 1967 and *Commentaires sur la Société du Spectacle* in 1988, Debord argues that "the concentrated and diffuse kinds of spectacular power had fused in "a third form … the *spectaculaire intégré* [integrated spectacular, or integrated spectacle] which tends to impose itself worldwide."[4]

Building on the above, Tonda's *dazzlement* helps us understand the crisis of democracy. It is the blinding light of the spectacle of US politics, where a parade of cartoonish political figures and issues blind us and overwhelm our perceptual capacities. Most emblematic is the figure of Donald Trump, a spectacular master image that disables effective public discourse by blinding our collective vision. This is the culmination of a variety of light metaphors, from "shock and awe" to "gaslighting," that have perfused contemporary discourse. My principal takeaway is that in Trump's United States, "democracy dies in dazzlement" is more suitable than "democracy dies in darkness." This paper explains the momentous ramifications of the politics of dazzlement to democratic life globally.

1. Joseph Tonda, *L'impérialisme postcolonial: Critique de la société des éblouissements* (Paris: Karthala, 2015). I am grateful to Clovis Bérgère for introducing me to Tonda.
2. Debord Guy. *La Société du Spectacle*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), p. 15.
3. Debord, 1967, p. 19.
4. Debord, 1988, p. 21.

CDE07 Platformed Democracies: Mediation, Participation, and the Struggle over Democratic Meaning

PP 0412 Fact-checkers' theory of democracy: Fact-checking as democratic repair?

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Mis- and disinformation have become a major democratic concern, designated as the world's biggest short-term threat by the World Economic Forum (2025). A plethora of policy solutions have been implemented from anti-fake news laws to algorithmic detection (Tenove, 2020), often reinforcing top-down conceptions of what democracy is and ought to be (Farkas & Schou, 2023). The European Commission (n.d.) points to independent fact-checking organisations as "a crucial pillar" in efforts to strengthen European democracies, since "unchecked, malicious content spreads like a cancer and puts the health of our democracies at risk" (Borrell, 2024).

While policymakers point to fact-checking as a democratic solution to mis- and disinformation, little research has explored how fact-checkers themselves articulate the relationship between fact-checking and democracy. This study draws on 14 semi-structured interviews with European fact-checkers working in 13 countries, analyzed through three rounds of qualitative, thematic coding using the data analysis software NVivo. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) How do European fact-checkers articulate the relationship between fact-checking and democracy? (2) Which normative views on democracy do fact-checkers reproduce? (3) How do fact-checkers' views on democracy reinforce or challenge dominant narratives of fact-checking as democratic repair?

The paper finds that most European fact-checkers share a theory of democracy identified by Herbert Gans (2003) among journalists—one in which "democracy rests on, and can be maintained by, the political news they report" (p. 56). By presenting the world 'as it is', fact-checkers argue citizens become informed, which is what upholds democracy. Thus, fact-checking is equal to democratic repair, since democracy succumbs without knowledge-producers that adhere to strict objectivity standards. To uphold such standards, some organisations even forbid their employees to be members of a political party, as democratic participation is seen as a threat to their objectivity. However, not all fact-checkers reproduce this conception of democracy. Some—particularly those working under sustained authoritarian pressure (e.g., legal threats and coordinated harassment)—express deep skepticism about fact-checking's ability to strengthen participation and give voice to political alternatives.

These findings contribute to existing research showing that professional fact-checking constitutes "a highly diverse community united by a similar practice but employing it with different logics in mind" (Lauer, 2024, p. 179). At the same time, the results complicate one-sided narratives - often found in EU policy - that directly equate epistemic interventions with democratic repair.

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CDE07 Platformed Democracies: Mediation, Participation, and the Struggle over Democratic Meaning

PP 0413 Democracy by design: The role of smartphone apps in young citizens' political opinion formation processes

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Young citizens between the age of 16 and 24 spend an average of five hours a day on their smartphones. During this formative phase in their lives, their opinions on political issues are still in development and highly susceptible to external factors. It is therefore likely that the apps on their smartphones play a differential but substantial role in the political socialisation of young citizens, especially given the low-threshold access to information, expression, and discussion related to political issues granted by many of these apps (e.g. TikTok, WhatsApp, ChatGPT).

Scholarly inquiry into the processes through which young citizens shape their opinions on political matters via their smartphones has yet remained limited. Although some quantitative research has linked online activity to certain political opinions, examining how young citizens experience the role of smartphone apps in their personal opinion formation processes is essential to clarify when, why, and through which mechanisms smartphones shape the opinions of youth. Previous qualitative studies on this topic have often not focused on youth or smartphones specifically or have decreased in relevance in the light of a rapidly evolving media landscape. Above all, they have directed their attention to only a subset of platforms, activities, and content, but have not yet adopted a holistic approach that includes the whole variety of smartphone-based platforms, activities and content that may potentially shape young citizens' political opinions.

In this paper, therefore, I pose the following research question: "How do young citizens experience (differences in) the roles of smartphone apps in shaping their political opinions?" Gaining enhanced insight into this process is crucial in the

context of current EU- and national-level policy debates concerning the regulation of social media platforms and underage smartphone usage. This study informs these debates by shedding light on potentially problematic aspects of young citizens' smartphone-based opinion formation practices that undermine the quality of the public sphere – key to democratic functioning – and by developing a clearer picture of which app characteristics may most likely contribute to these harmful dynamics.

Adopting a grounded theory approach, I aim to formulate an answer to the research question by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with young adults between the age of 16 and 24, ensuring variety in age, gender, education, and region in the selection of participants. The interview guide will evolve throughout the interview process, which will come to an end once saturation has been reached. This data collection process is planned to take place in January and February 2026, after which I will analyze the data and expect to have a full-fledged paper ready by September 2026 at the time of the conference.

CDE07 Platformed Democracies: Mediation, Participation, and the Struggle over Democratic Meaning

PP 0414 Social media influencers as defenders of democracy

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Academics and public discourse have expressed increased concern about the deteriorating state of democracy worldwide. Rising (right-wing) radicalism, populism, increasing (affective) polarization, spread of disinformation, and growing mistrust in democratic institutions and systems threaten even solid liberal Western democracies. While fragmented digital public spaces and the "third spaces" of social media (Bennet & Pfetsch, 2018) seem to function as catalysts of polarization, platform affordances may also be harnessed to facilitate democratic participation and increase resilience. In new media ecologies, new influential actors have emerged in the arena of societal discourse. Lifestyle social media influencers integrate consumerist content with societal and political topics (Author3 et al., 2025), and even radical ideas (Leidig, 2023). Influencers' political awakening highlights their potential in increasing their followers' interest in politics but also in sharing biased political content and influencer propaganda (Author1; Xu & Schneider, 2025).

In this article, we focus on lifestyle influencers, who also communicate political and societal topics to their followers who communicate political and societal topics to their followers. Social media platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for political engagement, but so far we know little about influencers' role(s) as democratizing or destabilizing forces/agents. To fill the gap in research on influencer politics, we examined Finnish political social media influencers' communication during the electoral period. Theoretically, we draw on democratic theory and three different democratic models: deliberative, participatory, and representative. Our research questions are: 1) How do social media influencers address political topics during elections? and 2) What roles do they take while addressing elections or political issues related to elections? To situate our findings in democratic political participation, we ask, 3) How do the identified roles reflect elements of different democratic models, deliberative, participatory, and representative?

We conducted a data-based, qualitative content analysis of 2,260 Instagram stories by 19 Finnish social media influencers who frequently engage in political discussions. Our data were collected one month before the 2023 Finnish parliamentary elections.

Our results indicate that influencers mostly addressed typical so-called lifestyle related topics (Suuronen et al., 2022): environment, gender equality, minority rights and, and did not fully follow partisan lines. Secondly, the data shows that influencers adopted various roles in electoral political discussions. These roles organize along two main dimensions: 1) presence of explicit political stancetaking and 2) encouragement of participation and deliberation. Based on these dimensions, we identified five roles that overlap and coexist in influencers' political content: *Endorser, Advocate, Interlocutor, Informative expert and Intimate inspirer.* Our analysis further suggests that components of different democratic models can be identified in influencers' political communication. The Endorser and Informative expert roles are closely linked to representative democracy, the Advocate aligns to participatory democracy and the Interlocutor reflects deliberative democracy. Finally, the Intimate inspirerer role emphasizes a personal, influencer-style political talk and incorporates elements of all three models. Based on our findings, influencers occupy a unique space among traditional actors of political communication: politicians, journalists, lobbyists, endorsers, advocates, activists, and opinion leaders.

CDE07 Platformed Democracies: Mediation, Participation, and the Struggle over Democratic Meaning

PP 0415 Distributing witnessing: Practicing connective democracy in platformed publics

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Research on democratic communication has long emphasized deliberative ideals of rational discussion across difference. Yet a growing body of scholarship has shown that deliberative democracy often fails to account for the structural inequalities that shape who is heard, whose suffering is recognized, and which voices gain visibility in public life. Recent work on connective democracy responds to these critiques by foregrounding the relational, affective, and uneven conditions under which democratic communication unfolds.

Building on this scholarship, this paper conceptualizes witnessing as a distributive democratic practice through which marginalized publics negotiate visibility, memory, and ethical responsibility in platformed media environments. Rather than treating witnessing as a purely moral stance or an individual expression of empathy, I argue that witnessing operates through everyday acts of selection, circulation, and amplification that redistribute attention under conditions of unequal power. While deliberative models privilege rational discussion, this paper highlights how democratic engagement often begins with affective and visceral responses that unsettle, motivate, and at times disrupt deliberation. In this sense, witnessing constitutes a form of democratic engagement that operates alongside—and sometimes in tension with—deliberative ideals.

Empirically, the paper examines Black–Asian encounters in U.S. digital publics as a critical site for understanding the possibilities and limits of connective democracy. Drawing on digital ethnography, interviews, and multimodal discourse analysis, I analyze how Asian diasporic and Black creators on Instagram respond to racialized suffering across moments such as #StopAsianHate and #BlackLivesMatter. I ask how solidarity can coexist with rivalry, and how witnessing becomes a contested affective site in which recognition, pride, guilt, and fatigue circulate in unequal measure.

By foregrounding distribution-as-politics, I argue that democratic communication today is shaped less by what is said than by how suffering, memory, and voice are selectively circulated across platformed media environments. The analysis shows that connective practices can foster moments of cross-racial recognition and ethical listening, but they also expose tensions of competitive victimhood and uneven visibility. Rather than resolving conflict, connective democracy operates through imperfect and contested practices that allow democratic communication to persist amid disagreement, incivility, and structural inequality. In doing so, this paper contributes to understanding civic engagement in platformed publics by foregrounding distributive practices and moving beyond simplistic good/bad actor frames of democracy.

CDE08 The Digital State, Platform Power, and Political Autonomy

PP 0416 Decoding algorithmic suppression: How digital activists uncover and navigate platform censorship in Finland

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Social media has afforded political influencers and activists an unprecedented level of visibility, thereby enhancing their ability to amplify political messages. Recently, research has observed that popular platforms have shifted from fostering digital activism to intensifying algorithmic censorship of political content. When platforms exert their automated censorship practices globally, they have created new and unforeseen constraints on freedom of speech for activists in democratic societies. Building on social media's dual role as both a facilitator and a controller of public discourse, this ongoing study explores the current state of political censorship in an atypical context: a Nordic high-trust society. It identifies political topics that are considered sensitive to social media algorithms.

Digital activism is closely intertwined with platform affordances, which makes the success of political content creators increasingly dependent on the visibility granted by algorithms. Although privately owned social media platforms have the right to control their content, scholars have expressed concern that activism has become more vulnerable to platforms' political and commercial steering. Prior studies indicate that groups with marginalized identities are disproportionately suppressed by platforms, which in turn amplifies voices that are already overrepresented while further silencing marginalized communities, thereby deepening social inequities.

This ongoing study presents findings from 15 interviews with Finnish digital activists who reported having experienced political censorship on social media, particularly on Instagram, a popular site for activism. The most censorship-triggering topics mentioned are Palestine and LGBTQ+ rights.

The findings show that, like commercial content creators, digital activism is deeply intertwined with platform affordances and goals of optimizing visibility and avoiding censorship. While platforms marginalize activist content, activists themselves have adopted visual, influencer-like modes of communication facilitated particularly by Instagram and TikTok, leading to

a blurring of boundaries between platform-friendly and activist content. Activists must continuously invent new communication strategies to maintain their visibility and popularity, as AI tools quickly learn to identify political content.

This study reveals a fundamental value-based conflict between activists and platforms. Activists explain censorship by commercial values that drive moderation: serious political content does not match the platforms' preference for light, feel-good material. Digital activism operates at the intersection of commercial and political discourses, within an environment dominated by entertaining and consumerist lifestyle content, to which activists must strategically align their messages. Because non-normative and minority identities are more likely to be suppressed, content on queer rights is more heavily moderated than environmental activism. The findings underline the volatility inherent in globally operating, privately owned platforms and question the sustainability of digital activism that relies upon them. Platforms can continuously alter their policies without transparent communication, and such changes are closely tied to broader political shifts. There is a deep distrust towards platforms, which continues to be increasing by censorship. Despite the distrust, the activists currently lack realistic alternatives to platforms that are overwhelmingly dominant in terms of visibility and audience reach. Should censorship render participation on these platforms impossible, they would be compelled to revert to traditional forms of protest and more private modes of discussion.

CDE08 The Digital State, Platform Power, and Political Autonomy

PP 0417 Performing digital authoritarianism: Environmental conditioning and platformed authority

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Digital authoritarianism is commonly defined as the instrumental use of digital technologies by states to surveil, repress, and manipulate publics (Polyakova & Meserole, 2019; Pearson, 2024; Roberts & Oosterom, 2025), with empirical attention focused primarily on China and Russia (Lamensch, 2021; Shahbaz, 2018). By treating technology as neutral and authoritarianism as regime-bound, regime-centered framings confine authoritarianism to particular political systems and obscure similar forms of infrastructural and platform power in democratic societies (Couldry, 2012; Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Poell et al., 2019). Drawing on governmentality and political theory that conceptualize authoritarianism as emergent and enacted (Glasius, 2018; Dean, 2025), this study reconceptualizes digital authoritarianism as a patterned, performative process produced through iterative interactions among state discourse, platform architectures, and public engagement. Using China as a theoretically revealing case rather than an exception, it shows how digital power becomes legible through repeated performances across platformed environments (Zhang, forthcoming). Although digital infrastructures can generate authoritarian effects even without coercion and within democratic contexts (Feldstein, 2021; Yayboke & Brannen, 2020), dominant frameworks continue to presume pre-existing authoritarian intent. Extending research on soft authoritarianism (Zhang, 2025; forthcoming), this study reinterprets visibility governance (Brady, 2009), participatory persuasion (Repnikova & Fang, 2018), and affective alignment (Zhu & Fu, 2023) as performative processes through which legibility, authority, and emotional intelligibility are iteratively constituted within digitally structured environments.

To examine these dynamics empirically, we analyzed 82,034 Weibo posts referencing Japanese politician Sanae Takaichi during a period of geopolitical tension, employing topic modelling, temporal and semantic analysis, and MRQAP to compare how state actors and ordinary users construct political narratives. State actors produced fewer, tightly focused topics, whereas users generated more expansive and fragmented themes. Temporally, user-initiated narratives often appeared concurrently with—or earlier than—state-led ones, showing that narrative initiation is not monopolized by the state. Semantic network analysis revealed clustered and lexically constrained state discourse alongside dispersed and diverse user discourse; MRQAP detected no significant structural similarity between the two, indicating that users do not simply replicate state discursive architectures. Rather than demonstrating top-down diffusion, these patterns expose a fundamentally heterogeneous, polyvocal communicative environment in which state and public discourse operate with substantial autonomy.

These findings advance a reconceptualization of digital authoritarianism as environmental conditioning—the subtle calibration of plausibility, salience, and semantic possibility within platformed infrastructures. Authoritarian power emerges not through persuasion or mimicry but through contested performances of interpretive authority shaped by algorithms, platform design, visibility hierarchies, and discursive conventions. This reframing carries three implications: (1) authoritarianism should be understood as a performative dynamic rather than a regime attribute, and thus can materialize within democratic settings; (2) platforms function as generative sites where authority relations are continuously enacted and contested, as reflected in Weibo's polyvocal ecology; and (3) digital authoritarianism is inherently unstable and contingent, as demonstrated by the heterogeneity of user discourse, the temporal autonomy of narrative initiation, and the weak semantic alignment between state and public narratives.

CDE08 The Digital State, Platform Power, and Political Autonomy

PP 0418 Shifting grounds of the digital state: AI imaginaries and anticipatory governance.

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As European societies confront rapid technological, political and institutional transformations, state–citizen relations increasingly unfold on shifting digital grounds. Artificial intelligence and datafication now shape how governments imagine desirable futures and reorganise welfare, administration and democratic communication (van Dijck, 2014; Amoore, 2020; Bareis & Katzenbach, 2021). This paper examines Estonia's emerging "personal state" as an empirical lens for understanding how AI-enabled anticipatory governance transforms the communicative foundations of democracy.

Drawing on sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff & Kim, 2015), dataism (van Dijck, 2014) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), the study analyses a corpus of Estonian policy documents to examine how the future of the state is narrated, legitimised and stabilised. The corpus includes the national AI and Data White Paper for 2024–2030, the national AI Action Plan for 2024–2026, the Digital Society Development Plan, the Personal State concept paper, the Welfare Development Plan for 2023–2030, and the implementation overview of the Estonia 2035 long term national strategy. Policy discourse frames prediction, personalised intervention and automated decision-making as naturalised public values, embedding anticipatory logics within welfare administration (van Dijck, 2014; Bareis & Katzenbach, 2021).

Through these narratives, the state is reimagined as an entity that can, and should, anticipate citizens' needs before they act. Anticipatory governance thus relies on forms of prediction and inference that shift political decision-making into technical systems, recasting uncertainty and discretion as problems to be managed through computation rather than democratic deliberation (Amoore, 2020). Such visions construct a pathway toward efficiency and seamless governance while simultaneously redefining expectations of care, responsibility and democratic legitimacy.

Yet these imagined futures coexist with structural dependencies on global cloud providers and platform infrastructures, revealing tensions between aspirations for sovereign digital capability and the material realities of platformised governance (Van Dijck, Poell, & De Waal, 2018). These entanglements unsettle established democratic assumptions such as who exercises authority in automated systems, who is accountable for predictive interventions, and whose futures are prioritised or foreclosed through anticipatory welfare practices.

The paper argues that Estonia's personal state exemplifies anticipatory statecraft as a mode of governance that reframes welfare as an engineering problem solvable through continuous optimisation and data-driven inference. By foregrounding what is promised (efficiency, proactivity, personalised services) and what is silenced (discretion, inequality, labour, infrastructural vulnerability), these imaginaries actively shape the shifting grounds of democratic life (Kaun & Masso, 2025). In doing so, they transform not only administrative practice but also the communicative basis of democratic participation, contestation and public trust.

CDE08 The Digital State, Platform Power, and Political Autonomy

PP 0419 The voice of the state: Democratic implications of AI-generated text-to-speech communication in public e-governance

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"[T]he way people interface with technology is in the midst of a paradigm shift from text input and output to voice input and output" (UNESCO 2019). This observation is the pivot of my forthcoming book *Reading with ears and writing with voices: The aural and oral turn in digital communication and media culture*, where I trace how born-written media like newspapers, books, letters, notes, e-mails, webpages, and text messages are presently experiencing a surprising popularity in digital audio versions, offering a convenient and effective way to engage with various texts in everyday life.

A significant driver in these changes is the fast development and implementation of text-to-speech (TTS) technology, accelerated by the EU Web Accessibility Act that came into effect across all EU member states on June 28, 2025, demanding high-quality TTS tools in various languages. This elicits critical questions related to voice design and perception: How are synthetic voices encoded and decoded, and what cultural or political consequences follow from these practices? What happens when some voices are privileged while others are excluded in AI-voicing? And finally, should voice design always strive for maximum human-likeness, or are certain texts and genres, for instance communication of legal rights, better served by being recognized as non-human robotic voices, with their distinctive aesthetics of machinic otherness?

This paper discusses these questions in relation to the TTS-solutions implemented by the Danish public authorities on the central self-service citizen portal Borger.dk. Denmark is a high-trust and digital-by-default welfare state. Trustworthy, accommodating, and smooth interaction on Borger.dk is therefore considered a democratic necessity when Danes are to fulfil their civic duties and, for example, apply for a new passport, social assistance, or other welfare services.

Currently, Borger.dk directs users to the TTS functions embedded in their own devices: In Danish, these voices are called Magnus and Sara in Apple environments and Christel and Jeppe in Microsoft environments. Consequently, the voice of Danish authorities is the voice of American Big Tech.

The paper will present preliminary results from data selected through the physical installation, Stemmeboxen (Eng: ballot box/voice box), placed in two Danish municipalities during spring 2026, inviting visitors to listen to TTS readings from Borger.dk and to rate their experience of the voices' credibility, courtesy, and intelligibility via a screen interface.

Drawing on sound-, voice-, and media theory, including the concept of listening publics (Lacey 2010) and Walter Ong's work on orality (1982), I develop the concept *synthetic orality* to discuss cognitive, cultural, and democratic implications of the ubiquitous synthetic voices in digital communication.

CDE08 The Digital State, Platform Power, and Political Autonomy

PP 0420 The promise and peril of generative AI for political autonomy in democratic societies

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Since the release of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in 2022, global uptake has been rapid and transformative, with millions using such tools to retrieve, process, and interpret information, including political information (Chatterji et al., 2025; Newman et al., 2025). This diffusion has intensified debate about opportunities and risks, with growing concerns about human over-reliance and the erosion of autonomy. Similar to anecdotal car drivers blindly following navigation systems into lakes, over-reliance on GenAI has been linked to diminished learning, creativity, and critical thinking (Bastani et al., 2025).

Despite these discussions and empirical evidence that GenAI can surpass human persuasion in political debates (Bai et al., 2025), alongside high levels of trust placed in such systems (Candrian & Scherer, 2022), the implications of GenAI for citizens' political autonomy—the capacity to form and justify political opinions independently—remain underexplored.

This conceptual paper addresses that gap by developing a theoretical framework for political autonomy in the era of GenAI. Drawing on political theory, communication research, and philosophy of technology, it proposes a two-dimensional model and applies it to GenAI-mediated opinion formation. It argues that GenAI introduces an unprecedented form of epistemic dependence—interactive, adaptive, and personalized—which raises distinct challenges for democratic self-governance.

Human judgment has always relied on social and technological scaffolding. Work on cognitive offloading highlights that reliance on external systems can enhance reasoning but may compromise autonomy when it undermines independent judgment (Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Carter, 2020). In the political sphere, this tension is normatively charged: democratic ideals expect citizens to form judgments based on their own reason, rather than external authority (Kant, 1784).

Political autonomy is conceptualized along two dimensions. The internalist–procedural dimension focuses on individuals' reflective capacities such as critical self-assessment and the ability to justify political beliefs (Dworkin 1988; Westlund 2009). GenAI may undermine this autonomy if users accept its arguments uncritically or when it weakens independent reasoning. It can support autonomy by encouraging users to articulate reasons, engage with counterarguments, and refine their views through sustained dialogue.

The externalist–relational dimension concerns the quality and structural conditions of the informational environment that shape independent judgment (Oshana, 2020; Rössler, 2002). Enabling conditions include diversity of exposure (Loecherbach et al., 2020), source transparency, contextual explanations, and information accountability. Conversely, obscure provenance, factual errors and embedded biases (Augenstein et al., 2024, Motoki et al., 2024) in GenAI outputs complicate these conditions.

These two dimensions are mutually dependent: internal reflection relies on external informational conditions, while favorable informational environments lose meaning without internal responsiveness. Thus, political autonomy emerges by degrees at the intersection of cognitive agency and informational structure.

This paper advances a much-needed conceptual understanding of autonomy in digital democracies at a formative stage of technology adoption. By mapping the risks and opportunities of GenAI use, it offers a framework for understanding how technological mediation shapes citizen judgment. This conceptual framework will guide future empirical research and inform the design of informational environments that promote reflective engagement. Understanding autonomy is essential for fostering democratic resilience in an increasingly GenAI-mediated information environment.

CDE09 Platform Politics, Collective Action, and the Making of Political Publics

PP 0518 Non-maleficence without institutional gatekeeping? How ethical issues are addressed in empirical digital activism research

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While early studies played down ethical concerns about online research, there has been a shift towards more formal systems governing social media research over the past decade. Institutional regulatory structures like Research Ethics Boards have increasingly scrutinised these projects, with ethics forms becoming 'gatekeepers' for how universities organise research culture. There has been a concurrent growth in ethical guidelines for online research from organisations like the Association of Internet Researchers. Yet, there remain doubts as to how seriously ethics is treated in research, above all in studies employing data mining techniques. This is particularly salient for Digital Activism (DA) studies, where activists might be exposed to harm through their identification in publications. In response to this issue, our paper provides a critical discussion of how ethical issues are addressed in empirical DA research. We draw on data gathered from a systematic review of journal articles published between 2009 and 2024. In the first instance, mentions of research ethics were searched in protest literature more broadly (N= 264) and then in DA articles specifically (N = 59). Coding categories included how ethics were narrated (e.g., popular approaches or the mention of formal procedures) as well as what attributes characterised articles discussing research ethics, for example the platform(s) studied, method(s) of data collection and analysis, authors' institutional affiliations and their respective disciplines. We tested specifically whether empirical DA research included ethics statements i.e. outlining whether ethics approval had been obtained prior to the study beginning and what measures were taken to protect participants, and whether articles were more likely to address ethical issues if they drew on traditional rather than digital data sources. Results indicate that very few DA articles published during this period included ethics statements. Nevertheless, there was much evidence of non-maleficence in the corpus, including those studies using digital methods. These are often rendered opaque by the submission requirements of journals and the norms of certain disciplines.

CDE09 Platform Politics, Collective Action, and the Making of Political Publics

PP 0519 AI activism: Artificial intelligence systems as tools and sites of contention

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This paper reports preliminary results from an exploratory research project that breaks new ground in the study of contentious political practices surrounding the use, development, and governance of artificial intelligence systems (AI), conceptualized here as "AI activism".

The analytical approach draws on a well-established body of literature on digital activism developed from ecological and praxeological perspectives (Shove et al., 2012; Trerè, 2019; Mattoni, 2020, among others), while also engaging with more recent scholarship on data activism (Beraldo & Milan, 2019; D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020; Ceccobelli & Mattoni, 2024, among others) and algorithmic resistance (Velkova & Kaun, 2021; Bonini et al., 2022; Bonini & Trerè, 2024, among others).

From a methodological standpoint, the study is situated within the interpretive research tradition (Morse, 1994) and adopts qualitative methods. Specifically, it is based on semi-structured interviews with activists and members of social movements, political collectives, NGOs, and other grassroots communities operating in diverse geographical settings and experimenting with AI systems for politically contentious purposes linked to social justice concerns.

The thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Guest et al., 2011) of the interviews reveals two broad and interrelated modes of AI activism: contentious politics *through* AI and contentious politics *over* AI.

The former captures practices in which AI technologies are strategically mobilized as instruments within wider socio-political struggles, as exemplified by *Data for Back Lives*, a "movement of scientists and activists working to make data a tool for social change instead of a weapon of political oppression." They build generative AI tools to go through public data and "pull out patterns" from repressive practices used by US law enforcement agencies that impact citizens' ability (especially people of color) to express their right to protest and congregate.

The latter frames AI systems themselves as arenas of political struggle, where conflicts emerge around governance arrangements, socio-technical design choices, ethical concerns, and claims to algorithmic rights, as illustrated by *Hermes*, for instance, who supports public administrations in the adoption and integration of AI into decision-making processes while addressing the risks associated with "surveillance and biometric recognition," such as privacy issues and deep fakes.

Taken together, these findings point to a mutually constitutive relationship between the two modalities of AI activism. They intersect and reinforce one another through dynamic feedback processes, revealing emerging alliances and persistent tensions between AI technologies and ongoing struggles for social justice.

Our analysis also introduces two labels we coin to describe distinct activist profiles, each with advanced competencies in computer science and digital design. "AI-Skilled Activists" refers to those who already possessed technical expertise and later redirected it toward long-standing political commitments, while "AI-Upskilling Activists" designates those who developed such skills over time, recognizing AI and digital infrastructures as crucial terrains of political contestation.

CDE09 Platform Politics, Collective Action, and the Making of Political Publics

PP 0520 Connected for change: Insights into the in-group communication of the German climate movement on Telegram

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Social movements are central to democratic life because they introduce, contest, and keep alive issues that may be neglected by institutional politics. One example is the climate movement, which plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse around the ongoing climate crisis. While public protests do not usually translate directly into legislation, they can indirectly influence political decision-makers by articulating demands and narratives (Schürmann, 2024). To achieve this, in-group communication is crucial. Effective communication among activists via social media enhances information dissemination, facilitates protest organization, and fosters internal cohesion and a shared collective identity. Accordingly, sharing information, circulating identity-forming content, and promoting collective action represent central communicative functions within movements (Caren et al., 2020; Schlette et al., 2023). Coherent in-group coordination and communication is also a prerequisite for efficiently distributing messages among members. In networked communication systems, this can be modeled through the properties of small-world networks (Watts & Strogatz, 1998), which combine high clustering and short average path lengths and might be important for their coordination and mobilization efforts.

While previous research has analyzed various platforms, Telegram has recently attracted attention due to its emphasis on privacy and its versatile communication capabilities. Scholarly work on Telegram has so far focused predominantly on far-right, conspiracist, and other fringe actors, whereas its use by progressive social movements has received comparatively less attention. This study addresses this research gap by analyzing in-group communication within the German climate protest movement on Telegram. Specifically, it examines both message content and the underlying network of forwarded messages. The analysis is guided by three research questions:

RQ1: What role do (1) sharing information, (2) sharing identity, and (3) promoting action play in the in-group communication of the German climate movement on Telegram?

RQ2: What are the structural characteristics of the network of forwarded messages related to the German climate movement on Telegram?

RQ3: To what extent does the network of forwarded messages exhibit small-world characteristics?

The study employs a computational social science approach. Data were collected via the Telegram API using the Python library Telethon. Through snowball-sampling, I gathered a total of 277 public channels and groups and 464,699 messages from five prominent climate groups. For content analysis, a random sample of 109,997 messages were coded using the HALC pipeline for LLM content analysis proposed by Reich et al. (2025). The network of forwarded messages was modeled as a directed graph of channels and groups and analyzed using standard network measures.

In summary, the German climate movement maintains a robust communication structure on Telegram. FFF occupies a leading position within the movement. Communication within the climate movement strongly focuses on the three primary activities of sharing information, sharing identity, and promoting action, though thematic emphases differ between groups. While the network structure forms clusters in places, it integrates individual actors into a comprehensive overall communication network. Finally, my findings reveal pronounced small-world characteristics, indicating that information can circulate efficiently. These findings may help explain why the climate movement has remained an established player in German public discourse.

CDE09 Platform Politics, Collective Action, and the Making of Political Publics

PP 0521 Mapping China's capabilities in police cloud platforms to improve protections of vulnerable populations

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This project investigates the expansion of state surveillance in China through the Ministry of Public Security's (MPS) Police Cloud infrastructure, a nationwide system that integrates public security, surveillance, and digital tracking technologies. Platformisation of police work is an organisational process that allows for datasets and databases to cross-link and create networks of information retrieval and production that can improve police work by facilitating knowledge creation. Despite

its extensive adoption and significant implications for governance and social control, the operational functions and limitations of Police Cloud remain largely unknown. Designed to consolidate vast amounts of personal and behavioral data, Police Cloud enables authorities to monitor targeted populations, including ethnic minorities such as Uyghurs and Tibetans, as well as civil society actors. While officially justified under the pretext of enhancing law enforcement and public safety, evidence suggests that these systems have been deployed to track and control vulnerable groups, raising critical concerns about profiling, social discrimination, and further erosion of liberties.

This project addresses this knowledge gap by providing a detailed, province-level analysis of Police Cloud infrastructure and its implementation across China. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines qualitative exploratory and quantitative descriptive techniques to examine a large dataset of public procurement documents (n = 1,054), triangulated with local newspaper articles and government reports. Through this analysis, the project maps the financial investments, technological capabilities, and institutional actors involved in constructing and maintaining Police Cloud systems. By uncovering patterns of procurement and identifying regional variations in surveillance practices, the research offers new insights into the mechanisms of digital authoritarianism and the role of technology in governance.

The findings contribute to academic debates on surveillance, human rights, and technology governance by illuminating how state-driven digital infrastructures operate in practice. This work not only advances academic understanding of China's security apparatus but also informs policy discussions on the global implications of technologically enabled social control.

CDE09 Platform Politics, Collective Action, and the Making of Political Publics

PP 0522 "Torrent is politics": Political participation of Ukrainian online pirates

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Peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing (when files can be downloaded from other computers directly through software called "torrent") has been the focus of many studies, often in the context of copyright and resistance to it. However, there is evidence that P2P file-sharing in certain contexts has much greater importance in encouraging civil activism, community building and identity formation than a narrow focus on copyright violation can show (Haigh 2007; Lindgren & Linde 2012; Mylonas 2012; Ashley 2015). One such context is Eastern Europe, where Ukraine has particularly demonstrated the social and political entanglements of P2P filesharing due to: ubiquity of piracy (e.g. Ukraine has been on the US government copyright infringement watch list since 1998), prolonged political and civic struggles between the Euro-Atlantic and pro-Russian vectors of development that are reflected in people's media consumption routines, and the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine serving as a turning point in nation-building as well as shifting society's attitudes towards the state.

Thus, this presentation focuses on external and internal arrangements of P2P file-sharing practices in Ukraine that facilitate political participation.

I approach P2P file-sharing and related practices from the perspective of the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer 2008; Mahon et al. 2016), which, in particular, analyses how practices are shaped by external arrangements. While applying the concept of civic culture (Dahlgren 2000; 2003; 2005; 2009), the study explores the complex of factors that enables political participation within the online piracy area. Here, I draw on Dahlgren's (2009) perspective on participation as a collective action, which challenges power relations within the domain of the political.

In so doing, this research employs an ethnographic approach, exploring empirical material gathered from in-depth interviews with torrent users and online observations of one of the largest torrent trackers in Ukraine, conducted before and after the full-scale Russian invasion. The tracker offers exclusively Ukrainian language content (original or translated) and plays a central role in the accumulation of pirated movies and TV series dubbed into Ukrainian by unofficial studios.

The study's results show that external factors, such as the domination of the Russian content market and the contested position of the Ukrainian language in Ukraine (Kulyk 2011; Belaniuk 2017) contribute to the politicisation of pirate practices in the context of general decolonisation discussion in Ukraine amid Russia's war. The torrent community has developed a specific civic culture, based in particular on pragmatic-affective motivations, language identity, meritocratic trust, democratic values, and, paradoxically, loyalty to the state. They managed to coordinate and conduct multiple connective actions (Bennett & Segerberg 2012) that challenged the political status quo. Through conscious consumerist choices, grassroots advocacy, and acts of archival solidarity, users attempted to accumulate Ukrainian language content online and facilitate its expansion within the legal market. By creating informal structures – the informal distribution system for 'unofficial' dubbing – they aimed to fill the gap in the legal market using available means. Amid the discussion about the decline or transformation of civic culture, the study sheds light on unexpected mediated contexts where it can develop.

CDE10 Transforming Institutions and Digital Publics

PP 0523 The transformation of strategic communication in nonprofit organizations in Romania through digitalization: A case study of "Code for Romania"

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Digitalization process profoundly transforms the manner in which strategic communication and civic mobilization are conducted within the contemporary public sphere. Although European policies, such as the Council of Europe's Digital Agenda (2022) and the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030, strongly endorse digital transformation, a significant gap persists between these policies and their practical implementation at the micro-community level. This discrepancy is particularly evident in Romania, which ranks lowest among the European Union member states on the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI, 2023), with a score of 47.5%. The present study investigates the effectiveness of civic technology tools in fostering transparency and public engagement within non-profit organizations. It aims to assess whether digital tools can genuinely bridge national strategies, including Romania's recovery and resilience plan (PNRR), with the daily operations of organizations. Employing a qualitative methodology, this research involves a systematic review of existing scientific literature alongside an analysis of relevant documents from 2020 to 2025. It encompasses key European and national strategic documents, as well as reports and digital outputs from Code for Romania, the country's leading civic technology non profit organization. This approach facilitates a comparison between top-down policy objectives and the actual practices of successful non-governmental organizations. Preliminary findings suggest that, although interest in digitalizing civil society is increasing, progress remains uneven. The results also indicate that civic technology organizations like Code for Romania serve as vital mediators, translating broad digital policies into practical tools that enhance transparency and support their implementation at the comunity level. However, beyond these digital elites, numerous non-governmental organizations face challenges in meeting European standards due to cultural disparities and infrastructure deficiencies. The study advances understanding of digital advocacy in contexts characterized by low digital adoption, emphasizing that effective integration of civic technology depends not only on technological advancement but also on strategic cultural shifts within organizations.

CDE10 Transforming Institutions and Digital Publics

PP 0524 When trust travels across institutions: How institutional credibility shapes perceived credibility of public broadcasting in Germany and the Czech Republic under conditions of polarization

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Public service media (PSM) are widely regarded as democratic trust institutions, yet their legitimacy is increasingly contested in contexts of polarization and declining confidence in political and societal institutions. Comparative research suggests that the credibility of PSM is closely embedded in broader structures of institutional trust, particularly in post-communist media systems with more fragile safeguards. This paper examines whether patterns observed in the Czech Republic—often discussed as a "stress-test scenario" for public broadcasting—also emerge in Germany, a more robust and institutionally entrenched PSM system. We focus on (1) how strongly PSM credibility is associated with the credibility of other major institutions and (2) whether these relationships are moderated by citizens' left–right political orientation.

Using parallel representative survey data from Germany (N = 2,036) and the Czech Republic (N = 2,094), we estimate country-specific multiple regression and interaction models predicting perceived credibility of PSM from credibility assessments of core institutions (government, parliament, parties, courts, universities/research, European Parliament), introducing political orientation as a moderator. Institutional credibility explains substantial variance in PSM credibility in both countries (Germany: adj. $R^2 \approx .54$; Czech Republic: adj. $R^2 \approx .49$), but the structure of these relationships differs.

In Germany, PSM credibility is most strongly associated with the credibility of universities and research institutions (Beta = .493) and, to a lesser degree, political parties (Beta = .185) and the European Parliament (Beta = .192), but not with credibility of the national government and parliament. This points to a comparatively detached anchoring of PSM legitimacy, linked to expertise and evidence-based public communication. Moderation analyses show that the association between credibility of science and credibility of PSM weakens markedly among more right-leaning respondents (Beta = –.420), indicating a polarization-related erosion of epistemic trust links. Surprisingly, no east–west differences are observed, despite PSM's later introduction and lower credibility in eastern Germany.

In the Czech Republic, by contrast, PSM credibility is more closely tied to political and state-proximal institutions—especially the national parliament (Beta = .281) and the European Parliament (Beta = .247), and to a lesser extent courts (Beta = .142) and science (Beta = .139)—indicating a more embedded, system-linked credibility configuration. Overall moderation is weaker, but political orientation significantly conditions the role of national parliament (Beta = –.241) and government credibility (Beta = .237), consistent with a more explicitly politicized perception of PSM as part of a contested institutional field.

Overall, the findings show that credibility of political and societal institutions forms a powerful foundation of PSM credibility. However, the architecture of credibility differs between a strongly institutionalized system (Germany) and a more fragile, politically exposed one (Czech Republic). Rather than a linear "future trajectory," the results point to two distinct credibility configurations: Germany exhibits similar dynamics in attenuated form, with polarization mainly weakening the link between credibility of science and credibility of public broadcasting among right-leaning respondents. The paper discusses the implications of these cross-national differences for understanding how PSM legitimacy is built—and how vulnerable it may become as polarization increases.

CDE10 Transforming Institutions and Digital Publics

PP 0525 The future is… military? How the German Bundeswehr normalizes military preparedness in the digital culture of everyday life

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The study presented is a completed first part of a bigger project and investigates how the German Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) uses scenarios of possible futures in their social media communication to shape societal acceptance, to legitimize military strengthening, normalize its presence and mobilize recruits. In times of rising uncertainty, imagined futures – ranging from catastrophic scenarios to possible counter-futures – gain significance for societal actors, as they justify present crisis management practices, while mobilizing support for their approaches (Anderson, 2010). In this context, the digital transformation of public sphere amplifies the visibility of counter-publics and their alternative imaginaries of crisis and societal futures (Kaiser & Rauchfleisch, 2019; Primig, 2025). Both state and non-state actors now operate within the same communication environments and their respective means, competing for audiences as well as their interpretations of reality, knowledge, and possible futures.

Against heightened political tensions and the ongoing war in Europe, pressure on nation-state action and Western security policies has intensified, and the military has regained public attention as a key expression of state capacity. In Germany, the Bundeswehr has increasingly been positioned – and has actively positioned itself – as the central actor in preparing society for potential crisis scenarios, both in response to social collapse and in ensuring preparedness, while holding state legitimacy. Social media communication plays a key role in the Bundeswehr's legitimacy-building and in supporting recruitment (Stengel, 2021). Yet, while this normative interpretation has historically been met with polarized public opinions, digital media significantly increased both the opportunities for and the visibility of criticism challenging the state's narrative authority that frames the Bundeswehr as an "army of democracy".

Against this backdrop, the study examines the digital communicative construction of crisis-related future visions and their associated practices by the Bundeswehr. Particular attention is given to processes of identity formation and community-building within the frameworks of digital metapolitics (Maly, 2024) and banal militarism (Thomas & Virchow, 2015). Drawing on a qualitative content analysis of Instagram feed and story posts from the accounts "bundeswehr" and "bundeswehrexclusive" (11/2025–03/2026), this study addresses following questions: Which future visions and present-day actions are constructed, and how are they narratively and visually framed? How are military practices embedded in popular lifestyle aesthetics and emotional frameworks? What role does the conveyance of self-fulfilment and community play?

The results of the study show that the Bundeswehr presents its visions of the future and the corresponding necessary practices through different narrative, visual, and affective dimensions; portraying military life in a highly selective and banalized way. By emphasizing personalized storytelling, intimacy, and audience engagement, combined with modern, gamified aesthetics, the format resembles a pop-cultural, entertaining media product, presenting military as both an effortlessly ordinary and adventurous lifestyle choice. Rather than merely informing or recruiting, the Bundeswehr communicates in ways aligned with alternative online-communities, using culturally and emotionally coded messages to actively shape what is perceived as legitimate and desirable – both in the present and the future; for individuals and society.

CDE10 Transforming Institutions and Digital Publics

PP 0526 50 shades of poverty Representation of and information presentation for people affected by poverty and at risk of social exclusion. A case study on Austrian public service broadcasting

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In light of ongoing crises, including high inflation rates and government austerity measures, issues such as poverty and social exclusion have once again come to the forefront of social debate (Dambach & Schöneville, 2025). This is evident in Austria too, where almost one in five residents are affected by poverty or are at risk of social exclusion (Statistik Austria, 2025). Numerous studies suggest that inaccurate media portrayals of poverty can lead to apathy among those affected, as well as a rejection of certain media services (Lindtner & Nærland, 2024; Pernegger, 2025). One such service is the public service broadcaster ORF, which occupies a prominent position in the Austrian media landscape. Not only does it have its

own public value claim to be a medium for everyone, it is also legally obliged to do so (4(2) ORF Act). It also has high TV (34.2%) and radio shares (60%), as well as 1.36 million readers of the ORF.at network. In this regard, questions arise as to how the ORF reports on poverty (RQ1), and how people affected by poverty are provided with information? (RQ2).

Adopting a public value perspective (Moore, 1995), we conducted two focus groups (n = 13 and n = 3) and eight structured interviews with social work, education, social sciences, and communication sciences experts, as well as individuals affected by poverty in Austria, from March to May 2025. The transcripts and minutes of the discussions and interviews were subjected to thematic analysis using MAXQDA. We distinguish between journalistic and editorial/institutional accountability.

Our analyses illustrate that social experts and individuals affected by poverty agree that public service programmes (television, radio, teletext and online) currently primarily report about, rather than with, those affected by poverty.

One way of generating public value is to engage those affected as experts in their own living environments. For instance, they could act as community reporters or broadcasting hosts, or cooperate editorially with self-help groups and civil society initiatives. This could take the form of new participatory discussion formats in neighbourhood centres, for instance. Furthermore, editorial offices must become more inclusive, and organisational and political changes are necessary (Stegmann & Stark, 2024). This includes revising editorial guidelines and providing continuing education programmes in community competence for traditional journalists.

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CDE10 Transforming Institutions and Digital Publics

PP 0527 Negotiating affordances, queering influencing: LGBTQIA+ Italian parent-influencers between activism and platform logics

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The contribution explores how Italian LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers negotiate with social media environments and embody an activist role as ambassadors of queer issues. It dialogues with the recent surge of contributions on activist-influencers and influencers' growing political involvement (see Murru et al. 2024), filling the important gap concerning LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers' relationship with digital environments.

Budding scholarship on activist influencers has pointed out the paradoxical nature of turning content-creation into political involvement (Banet-Weiser et al. 2020; Duffy et al. 2023; Murru et al. 2024; Scharff 2024), due to the increasing difficulty of distinguishing between political and commercial motivations when activism takes place in the neoliberal digital economy. Even when it comes to LGBTQIA+ influencers, figures who exhibit a clear potential to promote and facilitate public understanding of non-hegemonic narratives on LGBTQIA+ rights and oppression, the lens of homonormativity (Duggan 2002) can depoliticize gay cultures and anchor them to domesticity and consumption. This is especially significant when it comes to LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers, as in an effort to see their own identities and families recognized, they might be tempted to portray family and parenthood only in light of what is socially-acceptable, with limited potential to challenge the established status quo.

It is therefore paramount to focus on influencers' constant negotiation with affordances and platform logics to grasp the way in which different subjectivities interpret their political voice in a digital space that is not free from contradictions. However, little has been said about the intertwining between digital parenthood, activism, and LGBTQIA+ subjectivities, with the few existing contributions focusing on normalization and social acceptance of general users (Liliequist 2023), without taking into account public profiles.

This paper contributes to filling this gap by focusing on Italy, where LGBTQIA+ rights fall below Western European standards (ILGA 2024) and media's ambivalence in updating conservative notions of family and kinship fosters narratives that sustain exclusion. Consistent with the strand of studies in digital activism that focuses on individualized forms of activism (Dean 2023) and dialoguing with the recent interest on activist-influencers, the paper addresses the political involvement of

LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers and highlights how these subjectivities negotiate with affordances and the underlying social media logics.

Through qualitative content analysis and interviews to LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers on Instagram and TikTok, the contribution identifies and analyzes negotiations, idioms of practice and media ideologies, activism strategies, and communication styles of Italian LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers. Preliminary results highlight how Italian LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers contend with social expectations and integration and negotiate with affordances and the underlying social media logics. These creators' social media practices appear connotated by group-specific sense makings, allowing them to express (and act on) multiple ideologies regarding social media usage that are specific to being queer, a parent, and an influencer. This contribution thus allows for a nuanced analysis of the sense-giving processes that people from specific groups, such as the LGBTQIA+ community, assign to their political involvement on different media, expanding scholars' understanding of digital activism. In doing so, it also contributes to scholarship on activist-influencers and to the understudied field of LGBTQIA+ parent-influencers.

CDE11 Populist Communication and Anti-System Mobilization in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0625 Talking about democracy: Investigating young people's experiences and attitudes towards democracy and democratic citizenship

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This paper explores how scholars can engage with young citizens about their experiences and attitudes towards democracy and democratic citizenship. Its main objective is conceptual and methodological: to examine how research designs can enable young people to feel heard, included, and valued, while also generating empirical insights that can inform research and, consequently, evidence-based policymaking rooted in innovative ideas about what democracy and democratic citizenship may look like from the perspective of young citizens. Instead of viewing young citizens as objects of concern or deficits, the study aims to highlight their capacities and reflections.

Young people are increasingly described as disengaged from democratic processes and institutions (Morini & Runge, 2025; Zlobina et al, 2024). Existing research attributes this tendency to a complex interplay of factors, including declining trust in political institutions, information overload, fragmented and incoherent information, uncertainty and anxiety about global crises, and a perceived lack of democratic self-confidence (Mascheroni, 2017; Stald & Balle, 2023). While the situation in Nordic countries seems less severe compared to, for example, the United Kingdom or Southern Europe (Eurobarometer, 2024; Kitanova, 2019), concerns about youth disengagement remain. However, research (Cortesi et al, 2020; Sloam, 2025; Stald, 2023) also indicates that young citizens possess basic democratic knowledge, hold political opinions, and generally express commitment to democratic ideals.

The analysis is based on findings from a longitudinal study of youth, information, and democratic citizenship, and insights from a recent study. The methodological approach, analytical framework, and discussion are organised around a model comprising four interrelated approaches: recognition, respect, remembrance, and reflection.

Empirically, the paper draws on three interconnected sets of qualitative data collected ultimo 2024 as part of a study on young Danes' democratic approach. The study intentionally combines traditional methods, such as interviews, with formal assignments and experimental and creative approaches. It includes (1) in-depth interviews with 20 first-year high school students, (2) 75 mandatory school essays by first- and second-year high school students, and (3) 21 creative outputs in the form of rap lyrics and podcasts, collectively produced by the students. These materials provide a rich, multifaceted account of how Danish youth aged 16–19 reflect on democracy and their own roles as democratic citizens.

The findings demonstrate that the young informants possess foundational knowledge of democratic principles and an understanding of the roles, rights, and duties associated with democratic participation. They articulate nuanced attitudes towards the trustworthiness of democratic institutions and political representatives. Simultaneously, they describe experiences of not being taken seriously as democratic actors, which is linked to varying degrees of democratic self-doubt. Methodologically, the study underscores the importance of research approaches that validate young people's voices and create spaces for them to meaningfully express their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on democratic life.

In conclusion, the paper argues that inclusive and creative methodological designs are crucial for advancing both scholarly understanding and democratic engagement among young citizens, as well as for innovative rethinking of normative narratives of democracy and democratic citizenship and for a resilient digital democracy (Fuchs, 2025).

CDE11 Populist Communication and Anti-System Mobilization in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0626 Communicating partial populisms: Conceptual boundaries and dispersed expressions of populist communication in Swedish parliamentary debates, 1950–2025

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How have different forms of populist content been expressed over time and what do such patterns reveal about the conceptual boundaries of populism? To which extent do scattered populist expressions exist outside of established populist ideological positions, and at which point do they, in fact, amount to a complete populist positioning? In this article, we examine manifestations of populist communication in Swedish parliamentary debates between 1950 and 2025. This time period captures the development during different eras of democratic development, from post-war reconstruction to the transformations and challenges of an increasingly digitalised and polarized society. The framework of the study combines key definitional criteria of populism - people-centrism, anti-elitism, popular sovereignty and antagonism - alongside approximate string matching. In order to explore the spread of expressions in close similarity to explicit populist statements, the paper also examines related communicative output not wholly within the pre-defined categories. The analysis is based on identifying such expressions within a text-corpus of parliamentary debates including all political parties represented in the Swedish parliament. The paper conducts a quantitative analysis to identify variations in dispersed forms of populist expression within a comprehensive parliamentary text corpus consisting of all speeches in the Swedish Parliament during the period. By incorporating LLM-assisted topic modelling to detect themes beyond the deductive framework, the paper contributes to emerging strands of methodological innovation within large-scale text analysis. Moreover, a qualitative analysis of a subset of selected samples was also conducted in order to ensure conceptual validity. By building upon key categories of populism, the study contributes to reconsidering and contextualising populist frameworks within a longitudinal perspective. The empirical findings underpin a discussion of whether particular manifestations of populism, in moderate or dispersed forms, can be regarded as integral to democratic systems. In doing so, the study advances ongoing debates regarding the scope and conceptual criteria of populist communication.

CDE11 Populist Communication and Anti-System Mobilization in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0627 Anti-systemic movements: Communicative practices, media logics, and power

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In this research we argue that systemic critique can be mediated through radically different communicative arrangements and political ideologies. We develop our argument by contrasting how anti-globalisation movements on the far-right and the far-left use digital media to express discontent and mobilize support at two different points of time. Conceptually, we employ the concept of media practices (Couldry, 2012; Mattoni and Ceccobelli, 2024) to capture how movement actors' uses of digital media enact liberal and illiberal communication logics (Bennett and Uldam, 2024) and how they intersect with the different logics that underpin digital platforms and infrastructures (van Dijck and Poell, 2013). Revisiting the anti-globalisation movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s serves as a historically significant case of left-wing anti-systemic resistance which revolved around the consequences of globalisation. Their use of early digital media technologies, including web forums, independent media centres, email lists, highlighted a commitment to decentralized communication and bottom-up organising (Kavada, 2010; Uldam, 2010). Today, the right-wing anti-globalist movement leverages social media platforms to disseminate misinformation, challenge scientific consensus (e.g., through hashtags like #ClimateScam), and build networks around anti-immigrant, and nationalist narratives (Askanius, 2021). Strategies such as memetic warfare, cloaking (presenting radical content under seemingly neutral aesthetics), and astroturfing (fabricating grassroots support) illustrate how these actors use digital media, such as virality and algorithmic amplification, to gain visibility (Brock and Askanius, 2023; Farkas and Neumayer, 2018). On both ends of the political spectrum, anti-systemic movements protest what they see as the failures of globalisation, particularly in relation to job loss and economic inequality, although their visions for alternatives to economic and political systems diverge significantly. This research demonstrates that although anti-systemic movements on both the right and the left have used digital media to articulate criticism and to mobilise support, their practices differ at the intersections of political ideology, communicative practices, media logics, and power. The results contribute to our understanding of participation, accountability, and communicative power in contemporary democracies.

CDE11 Populist Communication and Anti-System Mobilization in Contemporary Democracies

PP 0628 Hijacking pride through connective action – Self-presentation, collective identity, and mobilization intentions in right-wing extremism

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Right-wing extremists continue to portray themselves as part of a counter-movement resisting against the existing system, through which they seek to disrupt democratic systems and structures (Birsl, 2018). The role of social media in particular has proven to allow right-wing extremists to come together and form up into communities of connective action that operate without any form of overarching organization or formally documented instructions and tasks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Through this, they succeed in employing sophisticated tactics that enable them to communicate their anti-democratic beliefs in the digital sphere (Fielitz & Kahl, 2021). One example is the use of counter-movements to weaponize one's self-presentation as a victim, as seen in protests against the LGBTQIA+ community.

To deepen the understanding of these online spaces and their consequences for the democratic order, this study aims to examine how right-wing extremists shape their communication on X in terms of self-presentation (Martin et al., 2024), collective identity (Barron & Bollen, 2022, Coretti & Pica), and mobilization intentions (Birsl & Quent, 2025) intentions. These terms have been used vaguely in past research, not being properly defined or related to each other. The theoretical work in this paper addresses this issue by constructing a model that reveals the connection and chronological logic of these constructs within right-wing extremist online communication.

The case study that this research is going to analyze is "Stolzmonat". Being the literal German translation of pride month, "Stolzmonat" is a German right-wing extremist movement that originated on X in June of 2023 to form a counter-movement to the internationally known pride month (which celebrates pride of LGBTQIA+ communities) and express their own pride in being heterosexual Germans (Volk, 2025; Jasser, 2023). They post various and sometimes multimodal right-wing comments that vary greatly in tone and are often homophobic, racist, misogynistic and/or nationalistic. The queer hostile hashtag gained traction in Germany beyond June of 2023 and can be recognized as a form of right-wing connective action. #stolzmonat is a counter-protest hashtag utilized to hijack pride similar to counter-movements such as #AllLivesMatter (Gallagher et al., 2018). Through qualitative content analysis we analyze posts from X tagged with the hashtag #stolzmonat.

We analyze how right-wing extremist actors use this hashtag to instrumentalize gender and queer identities (Zentai, 2025) and ethnicity (Bronner, 2018), weaponize victimhood (Chouliaraki, 2024), rely on anti-elitism (Harsin, 2018) as well as stage crises (Moffit, 2014) and connect these media practices to the functionality of connective action and the communication intentions (self-presentation, collective identity, and mobilization).

By considering the underlying dynamic of disorganized internet communities that use refined tactics to effectively communicate their beliefs to potential new members by pursuing specific communication goals and employing right-wing populist tactics, it is possible to gain a clearer understanding of how right-wing extremism in Germany is deliberately attacking the foundations of democracy through communication on social networks, and to identify possible solutions to this highly relevant issue.

CDE12 Grassroots Communication, Citizenship, and Community Governance in Times of Change

PP 0629 Ground-up epistemologies of change: Community-driven technologies and the making of inclusive democratic futures among Dalit communities

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In the recent years, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, democratic life across the globe has become increasingly dependent on digital technologies, which has been positioned as default solutions for governance, participation and public service delivery. In India, digital technologies were extensively deployed to manage the pandemic, including vaccination registration, Covid-19 hotspots mapping, biometric verification, contact tracing (Das, 2020; Madan, 2021; Mathur, 2020). While framed neutral and efficient, these digital governance infrastructures reproduced long-standing structural inequalities, generating caste-based exclusions embedded within technological design and implementation (Deshpande, 2021; Madianou, 2020; Mondal & Karmakar, 2021; Rahman, 2020).

This paper situates these exclusions within broader caste-based technocratic regimes that have historically marginalized Dalit knowledge by assuming universal users, abstract data practices and top-down models of governance. Digital systems frequently presuppose a "standard" human subject (Milan, 2020) – urban, upper caste, digitally literate and socio-economically secure. As a result, Dalit communities and other marginalized populations were systematically rendered illegible within pandemic governance infrastructures, leading to exclusion from services ostensibly designed for public welfare. These dynamics expose how democratic participation and access are shaped not only by institutional arrangements but also by communicative and technological infrastructure.

Against this backdrop of epistemic exclusion, this paper advances a framework of ground-up epistemologies of change by examining grassroots, community-driven and co-created technological practices that contest such exclusions from within the margins. Building on scholarship that emphasizes situated, embodied and plural ways of knowing (Arora, 2024; Escobar, 2018; Haraway, 1988; Santos, 2016), the paper draws on Pink et al.'s (2016) concept of digital materialities to analyze how technologies emerge through relational, affective and material engagements between people, infrastructures and environments. This approach provides a methodological counterpoint to technocratic governance by foregrounding how democratic communication is enacted through everyday practices rather than abstract systems.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork (participant observation, 10 qualitative interviews) conducted over a period of two years in Delhi, India, this paper thus focuses on two organizations – Gram Vaani and Design Beku whose work models community-driven technological approaches. The paper explores how these organizations engage with Dalit communities and other marginalized groups to repurpose, redesign or reimagine technological tools as democratic infrastructures of collective agency, mutual care and epistemic justice.

The paper shows that technologies become meaningful not as standalone artefacts or technical fixes, but when embedded within community-led processes of learning, deliberation and shared political purpose. By foregrounding marginalized knowledge practices as legitimate and generative, these initiatives challenge dominant models of technological governance and demonstrate how communication functions as a constitutive practice through which democratic subjects, solidarities and futures are actively produced.

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CDE12 Grassroots Communication, Citizenship, and Community Governance in Times of Change

PP 0630 The invisible rhizome: The characteristics, roles, and challenges of community media in Czechia

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This paper examines the characteristics, democratic roles, and structural challenges of community media in Czechia within a media system shaped by ownership concentration, declining trust in journalism, and ongoing digital transformation. While community media have attracted renewed scholarly and political attention as participatory, civil-society-based alternatives to commercial and public service media, their position in post-socialist media systems remains underexplored. The Czech Republic represents a particularly instructive case, as it lacks a formally recognised third media sector and a dedicated regulatory framework for community media.

The study is guided by a rhizomatic theoretical framework, drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome as further developed in community media scholarship. Rather than conceptualising community media as fixed organisational entities, the rhizomatic approach foregrounds relationality, heterogeneity, and contingency, allowing community media to be understood as embedded practices situated at the crossroads of civil society. This perspective also enables a critical analysis of the tensions between participatory ideals and material constraints.

Empirically, the paper draws on twelve semi-structured interviews with journalists and editors from Czech mainstream and community media, four interviews with representatives of national media authorities, and four focus groups with citizens (n = 38) – all carried out in 2024 and 2025 as part of an EU Horizon project. The data were analysed using a discursive-material framework and grounded theory-inspired coding procedures. This multi-perspective design captures how community media are perceived and evaluated by producers, regulators, and audiences.

The findings show that community media in Czechia are characterised by strong community-centred missions, participatory production practices, and a reliance on volunteer labour. They function as spaces of learning-by-doing, informal journalism training, and inclusive representation, particularly for marginalised groups such as ethnic minorities, migrants, and students. In democratic terms, community media act as discursive correctives to mainstream journalism, platforms for civic participation, local watchdogs, and laboratories for journalistic experimentation. At the same time, the study identifies persistent challenges that limit the realisation of this democratic potential. These include chronic financial precarity, regulatory exclusion from the dual public–commercial media system, limited visibility in platform-dominated attention economies, and the need to distinguish democratically oriented community media from disinformation-oriented "alternative" outlets.

The paper concludes by arguing that community media constitute a crucial, though fragile, component of the Czech media ecology. We are conceptualising this tension as an "invisible rhizome": while community media are deeply embedded in local communicative practices, their democratic contributions remain structurally marginalised and politically under-recognised.

Making the rhizome visible requires not only highlighting participation and innovation, but also providing sustained regulatory, financial, and institutional support to stabilise participatory media practices in times of democratic uncertainty.

CDE12 Grassroots Communication, Citizenship, and Community Governance in Times of Change

PP 0631 The governance of refugees between securitising and innovative practices: A case study on Ukrainian women refugees in Romania

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The 'new normal' (Krzyżanowski et al., 2023) of Ukrainian displacement in Europe has reactivated crisis imaginaries and societal anxieties around migration with direct implications for democratic legitimacy and accountability. The unexpected immediacy of the refugee as a symbolic presence has enabled a range of actors to mobilise migration crisis rhetoric as a narrative device (Dines, Montagna & Vacchelli, 2018), shaping political responses and legitimising particular modes of governance. In Romania, the media have been central in constructing the refugee crisis as a public problem, and at times as a legitimation crisis (Jakobson et al., 2023), feeding a rhetoric of emergency and securitisation which narrows the space of public deliberation and redefines who counts as a legitimate political subject. We approach these dynamics through the lens of multi-level governance (Bassoli & Campomori, 2024), understood as vertical relations between levels of government and horizontal relations between the state and civil society, including voluntary actors.

Against this background, Ukrainian women refugees have often been framed by policy-makers, NGOs and the media as victims deemed worthy of various forms of temporary protection. Yet refugees' lived experiences frequently resist victimhood and instead articulate forms of everyday democratic practice beyond formal institutions. We argue that two dimensions are central: (1) women navigate bureaucratic and family figurations of local and transnational character (Christ et al., 2021), where rights, obligations, and recognition are operationalised through everyday encounters with institutions and communities; and (2) many become primary decision-makers within their families, with this reconfigured agency shaping mobility, communicative and care practices, and transactional engagements with political actors. Through these negotiations, women recalibrate the terms of protection, responsibility, and belonging, producing alternative democratic imaginaries of participation and mutual accountability.

Empirically, we examine tensions between a public discourse still tributary to one-way integration philosophies and refugees' own accounts of integration as negotiated practice. We triangulate Romanian mainstream and independent media coverage (N = 153) across two key moments (the outbreak of the war and one year later) with semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian women refugees residing in Romania (March–May 2025). Using a temporally layered design, we trace how crisis imaginaries are constructed in Romanian media (2022–2023) and how these mediated governance frames are lived and renegotiated in refugees' longer-term integration trajectories (interviews, 2025). The media analysis highlights how citizen and volunteer-driven mobilisation can operate as both an apolitical response to immediate needs and as a critique of institutional shortcomings, thereby repoliticising humanitarian discourse in Romania. The interviews show integration as layered and unfinished, marked by "permanent temporariness", with agency grounded in caregiving, relational labour, and community solidarity amid persistent structural barriers. Overall, we show how refugee governance is negotiated between institutional actors and communities at the intersection of hegemonic crisis intervention and emergent, participatory, non-hierarchical practices of community governance and activism. In doing so, we position refugee reception as a site of democratic life on shifting grounds, where mediated imaginaries, civic infrastructures, and everyday negotiations of rights reconfigure participation and accountability beyond formal political arenas.

Keywords

refugee governance, community activism, power relations, migration regimes

CDE12 Grassroots Communication, Citizenship, and Community Governance in Times of Change

PP 0632 Volunteerism vs professionalism in community media: South African tensions and hybridity

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Community media is widely conceptualised as an alternative to mainstream media, placing the power to communicate directly in the hands of communities whose members own, control and contribute to the outlet. The principle of voluntary work emerges as central in both scholarly and media development literature, contrasted with professionalism in mainstream, commercial media where production and therefore "voice" is in the hands of people paid to create media products for sale and profit. From a community media perspective, professionalism is a mechanism that distances media from their audiences. Media reforms that took place in South Africa during the transition from apartheid in the mid-1990s created a new legal and regulatory framework for community broadcast based on such ideals. Some 30 years after the sector was created, new research reveals complex attitudes to volunteerism and professionalism in South African community media. The research, consisting of interviews with practitioners, document analysis, observation and surveys, surfaces a number of themes: first, economic pressures on community media in marginalised communities – the main targets of

the post-apartheid drive to democratise the media – have created a hybrid model that is firmly commercial in orientation despite being non-profit in legal form. Direct government support is limited and community donations virtually unknown, leaving advertising income as the main source of revenue. Even government support comes mainly in the form of payment for airtime. Second, high unemployment in marginalised communities has driven an influx of volunteers, mostly young, who are motivated strongly by the hope of converting to a paid position, creating economic pressures on stations already struggling to survive. Third, community stations' ability to rely on voluntary work to reduce costs is therefore limited and managers find the involvement of volunteers burdensome, with pressures for payment, high churn and issues of reliability. Instead, many express a desire for professionalisation, understood to mean reliance on a fully paid, trained staff, and expect the state to foot the bill.

The research has implications on several levels. For South Africa, there is a need to reconsider the framework created for the sector and the assumptions on which it was based. More widely, the example of South Africa, marked by high levels of poverty and inequality, highlights the need to look more closely at the economic implications of media development in marginalised communities, including established donor and other expectations for sustainability. Fundamentally, the experience highlights difficulties with the ways in which normative assumptions about community-based media translate into resource-poor contexts of the Global South.

CDE12 Grassroots Communication, Citizenship, and Community Governance in Times of Change

PP 0633 Enacting the "active citizen": Materialities, technologies, and subjectivities of civic education in the Swedish youth-led climate movement

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The question of what future citizens formal schooling is to foster has occupied the minds of educational actors for centuries. Following the notion of education as a citizen-making enterprise (Wan, 2014), the digital age has brought with it new questions of what it means to take part in democracy are arising, not least posing challenges in the civics classroom around controversial political topics (e.g. Andersson, 2016; Ojala, 2019). Set apart from legal conceptions of citizenship as tied to geographic belonging, passports, and other documentation, this article approaches the notion of the "active citizen" in digital democracy as an open and unstable ideal negotiated and enacted not only by educational policy makers, teachers, and adults in general, but by young people themselves. The article examines how the citizenship ideal of civic education is enacted beyond the constraints of formal schooling, focusing on the Swedish youth-led climate movement as a network of civic action, instruction, and subjectivity in the rapidly changing media landscape of the public sphere.

Theoretically, the article brings together Hannah Arendt's concept of action (1958), John Dewey's educational theories of experience and communication (1916), and Gert Biesta's (2022) notion of world-centered education and democratic subjectification. While Arendt and Dewey are often understood through their more abstract notions of speech, participation, and deliberation, this article foregrounds their shared emphasis on the materiality of the world as a condition for political and educational action. Civic education is thereby understood as an existential and relational process through which subjects arrive in a shared world by taking initiative, acting together with others, and enduring the unpredictable consequences of their actions. Importantly, this arrival is not only set against the consequences of other individuals and groups of civil society but are reliant on, as well as subject to, a constantly shifting material and not least technological world.

Empirically, the article draws on an ethnographic study of the Swedish youth-led climate movement, combining observation across the online-offline divide (Hine, 2008) and interviews with young activists. The article brings to light the ideals of citizenship that come to be when young people themselves navigate making their voices heard in a saturated, polarized, and at times hostile climate of public debate in a democratic society. This ideal citizen here sits in the tensions between context-specific traditional democratic values and the technologies of that democracy, knowledge as both scientifically established and processual, and a state of constant arrival through protest – enacted both through public civic action and experimental instruction in preparation for such action. The study at hand informs an understanding of civic education not as a means to an end – as the production of a certain type of ideal citizen – but as an inherent part in participating in society as unique subjects and as active citizens. Ultimately, it turns the educational question of what future citizens civic education is to foster for society on its head, asking instead what society it is that future citizens themselves actively partake in creating.

CDE13 Consolidating Digital Nationalism Studies: Infrastructures, Representations, Practices

PN 68 Enactment of Russian digital nationalism and geopolitics: Digital media practices on Telegram and VKontakte

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The paper investigates the enactment of Russian nationalism and geopolitics through digital media practices on non-Western social media platforms (Telegram and VKontakte) before and after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The pervasiveness of nationalism in digital media and the nation-based logic of technological infrastructure are focal points of academic discussions (Ahmad, 2022; Mihelj & Jiménez-Martínez, 2021; Rabinowitz, 2023; Skey, 2022). Political parties, their leaders, and influencers promote their ideologies and construct notions of the self and the internal or external enemy through digital media (Arnesson & Reinikainen, 2024; Mayerhöffer et al., 2024).However, less is known about how neo-authoritarian media systems, such as the Russian Federation—where the state has a hegemony over both discourse and digital infrastructure (Becker, 2004; Filimonov & Carpenter, 2021)—construct banal forms of nationalism and geopolitics through digital media practices and media intermediaries. Neo-authoritarian hybrid media systems involve media intermediaries facilitating nation-building, political influencing, discourse dissemination, and user engagement in addition to mechanisms for surveillance and restrictions. The study explores how Russian media owned by the state (RIA Novosti) or by entrepreneurs of influence (Tsargrad TV, RIA-FAN, and the League for Safe Internet) utilize the affordances of social media platforms to construct nationalism and promote managed activism, participatory surveillance, and pro-war mobilization of Russian audiences. Relying on theories of nationalism about the banal and discursive construction of the nation and geopolitical other (Billig, 1995; Calhoun, 1997; Wodak et al., 2009), a broader definition of digital practices as "an assemblage of actions involving tools associated with digital technologies" (Jones et al., 2015, p. 3) is adopted. Netnographic observations have been carried out between June 2021 and June 2023 on VK and Telegram channels associated with the above-listed media, and posts, images, and videos have been scraped and analyzed. The study reveals that the nation and geopolitics are constructed through representation and aesthetics, participatory practices through virtual and augmented reality applications, social media hashtag campaigns, and strategic communication through entertaining genres such as reels. Denunciation practices through user-led norms compliance in support of the ruling authorities and exclusion of opposition were identified. The start of the invasion transformed banal to hot nationalism, popularizing "Z" and "V" strategic campaigns, wartime support, and selective depiction of events. The findings demonstrate that banal and hot forms of nationalism are enacted in digital media as parts of a larger discourse about Russian internet sovereignty and opposition to Western platforms is promoted as wartime information security. This paper fits with the ECREA 2026 theme about "Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures" because it explores how geopolitical conflicts are manifested not only in terms of Internet governance but also in the application of digital media practices to construct identity and notions of the external or internal enemies. It advances theoretical understandings of how political phenomena such as nationalism and democratic backsliding are performed and enacted in digital media in addition to their discursive manifestations (DeCleen et al., 2025; Laruelle, 2025).

CDE13 Consolidating Digital Nationalism Studies: Infrastructures, Representations, Practices

PN 69 Hallucinating the nation: A comparative multi-modal analysis of genAI's visual regimes of representation

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The increased reliance upon genAI such as ChatGPT or Copilot to search and generate cultural content renews the urgency of understanding how such novel forms of mediation participate in ideological reproduction. While scholarship has started to examine race, class and gender biases in genAI output (Gengler, 2024), less attention has been devoted to the nation (Goode, 2021). This is even more important as far-right actors are already using genAI to develop exclusionary and gendered representations of the nation (Sengul et al. 2026). While significant, this line of research leaves aside potentially more banal and everyday representations of the nation by genAI. Consequently, we take an exploratory approach to examine genAI's tacit visual regimes of representing 'the nation'. Text-to-image genAIs work with training datasets where small elements of images have been textually labeled. Generating new images thus starts from culturally shared assumptions and taken-for-granted social categorizations (Sobey, 2025). Furthermore, genAI output is a sociotechnical product: not only are worldviews and biases embedded within training datasets, but the output blends a seemingly technological generation process with user input through prompts. Approaching genAIs as political, sociotechnical agents (Hurley, 2024), we ask: What types of markers do genAIs reify as national symbols? What imagined features of the nation are drawn upon and further perpetuated? And, what is the ideological role of the sociotechnical dimension of these representations? Against this backdrop, we examine 200–250 images generated by identical prompts across popular genAIs (e.g., ChatGPT, Stable Diffusion, Gemini, NightCafe, etc.) (Gengler, 2024; Hurley, 2024; Putland et al., 2025; Sobey, 2025). By combining prompts

in local languages to visualize historical accomplishments and national celebrations with requests to visualize families and landscapes, the dataset captures both explicit and banal representations of the nation. To compare different 'national' markers and features, we focus on two sets of neighboring Eastern European countries (set 1: Romania, Republic of Moldavia, and Hungary; set 2: Cyprus, Greece and Turkey). Characterized by the enduring popularity of ethnocultural forms of nationalism, interwoven histories leading to competing territorial claims, and shared cultural practices, these countries provide an ideal sample for comparisons. The AI generated images and accompanying textual explanations are qualitatively analyzed informed by multimodal discourse analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2023; Putland et al. 2025). Preliminary results reveal that architecture, landscape features, clothing, and cultural stereotypes mark everyday life as 'national'. In contrast, flags, history, scientific achievements, and folk traditions signify the nation. The cross-country and cross-genAI comparisons reveal the seemingly universal inter-changeability of the local contents, conveying the universality of the nation as a social category. The consistency of such results with visual regimes of the nation in Western digital culture (Dumitrica & Frijns, 2025) speak to the prevalence of discursive logics preferring "stylized and commodified images of nations, rather than realistic interpretations" (Kaneva, 2024, p. 68). Such ideological work, we argue, perpetuates post-national visions of nations as uncontested, beautified and depoliticized objects for aesthetic consumption.

CDE13 Consolidating Digital Nationalism Studies: Infrastructures, Representations, Practices

PN 70 Searching for discourse diversity: Social media and digital nationalism

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This paper investigates the nature of digital nationalism on social media, examining how Twitter discourse operates around nationally significant political events. The study takes as its starting point an ongoing scholarly debate: while some researchers argue that social media makes nationalism more participatory and diverse through bottom-up engagement, others contend that discursive diversity remains circumscribed within certain boundaries. The authors use this tension as a framework to explore additional characteristics that define nationalistic discourse on social media. The paper conceptualises diversity along two dimensions: participatory diversity (who participates and how frequently) and discursive diversity (the range and features of ideas expressed). Understanding both is essential for assessing digital nationalism's social constructivist nature, enabling comparisons with offline nationalism and tracing how digitally projected ideas translate into popular nationalist sentiments through social media network effects. Two research questions guide the study: How numerically diverse is user participation on Twitter regarding nationally relevant political topics? What are the discursive features of these tweets? The study addresses its significance on two key fronts. First, case selection is difficult — researchers need topics that genuinely concern core features of nationhood (national identity, history, ethnicity) in contexts with high internet penetration and active social media engagement. Second, data collection from social media platforms has become increasingly restricted, making comprehensive, large-scale analysis difficult. To address these challenges, the study examines Twitter discourse surrounding the abrogation of Article 370 in India—legislation that revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir. This case directly engages fundamental questions of nationhood and identity. The authors situate their work within existing literature that presents contrasting evidence about social media's democratising potential. While some studies show social media enabling counter-frames against government narratives, others (particularly from Iran) demonstrate that platforms can be co-opted by elites to reinforce the status quo. Additionally, phenomena like bot activity, astroturfing, and tweet-storming complicate assessments of genuine participatory diversity. The paper's key findings reveal that Twitter discourse supporting the Article 370 abrogation was dominated by a relatively small number of influential users, suggesting limited participatory diversity. The authors also identify clear instrumentalisation of the platform for promoting nationalistic legislation. Most significantly, they introduce the concept of "tokenistic discourse"—user-generated nationalist content that lacks substantive depth and is overwhelmed by nationalist declamations rather than meaningful engagement with ideas. This finding adds a new dimension to understanding digital nationalist discourse beyond simply categorising it as "diverse." The authors conclude by redirecting digital nationalism studies toward new questions: Why do users engage in tokenistic discourses? What purposes do these serve? And how can researchers trace the causal process from online discourses to mass public opinion? The study contributes a context-specific analysis from India to help the discipline develop more nuanced, converging understandings of digital nationalism across different national contexts, while critically reassessing what "diverse" discourse truly means by distinguishing it from genuinely competing or divergent viewpoints.

CDE13 Consolidating Digital Nationalism Studies: Infrastructures, Representations, Practices

PN 71 Embracing the package deal: How foreign content creators engage with Chinese platforms

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This paper investigates the complex engagement of foreign content creators with Chinese digital platforms, using Xiaohongshu (RedNote) as a timely and compelling case study. The study takes its cue from the unexpected migration of a substantial cohort of US-based TikTok users and some major content creators to Xiaohongshu in January 2025, during

a brief, though impactful, TikTok ban by the Trump administration. While the ban was short-lived and many users returned to TiktTok, a significant number of foreign creators chose to remain on Xiaohongshu, seeking to tap into the immense potential of the Chinese digital market. Content creators in general are already dictated by nested precarities (Duffy et al., 2021) and the regime of visibility (Jiménez-Martínez & Edwards, 2023). On top of that, foreign content creators operating on Chinese platforms face additional layers of challenges posed by Chinese platforms, politics, and audiences. This is exacerbated by the rising nationalism in digital China, ranging from the party-state's emphasis on digital sovereignty (Jiang, 2024) and cultural confidence, participatory censorships in fandom nationalism (Wang & Huang, 2026), and the increased awareness and public discourses of anti-racism and anti-imperialism (Zhang, 2024). It is crucial to unpack the intricate power dynamics and strategic negotiation between key stakeholders involved. Therefore, this research focuses on these foreign creators' daily production practices to understand their adaptive strategies. To do so, a thematic analysis of 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with foreign content creators who have established a presence on Xiaohongshu is conducted. Preliminary findings suggest that these foreign content creators embrace relevant opportunities and challenges as the "package deal" of market entry. This includes navigating China-specific platform dynamics such as opaque content moderation policies, a complex matrix of social norms that govern acceptable content and interaction styles, and Chinese audiences' perceptions and interpretations of their (dis)respect of China and Chinese people. Therefore, while the Chinese party-state does not intervene directly in such foreign content creators' practices on Chinese platforms, its structural power prompts both the Chinese platforms and their users to engage with digital nationalism that nudge the creators to self-discipline. These findings offer vital perspectives on the geopolitical and cultural dimensions of global platform economies and digital labor.

CDE13 Consolidating Digital Nationalism Studies: Infrastructures, Representations, Practices

PN 72 Life in platform nations: Exploring citizen engagement with digital sovereignty in Brazil, Ukraine and the UK

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Faced with the growing power of digital platforms, and driven by concerns over online harms, foreign election interference and privacy protection, governments world-wide are seeking to claw back control over digital technologies. Amidst these developments, the language of nations and nationalism is seeing a comeback, offering a tool for legitimating both authoritarian and democratic forms of state control over the digital world. As a result, the digital infrastructures we live in are becoming increasingly nationalized. Yet, while literature examining the rise of digital sovereignty from a top-down, policy and infrastructural perspectives has grown, little is known about how ordinary citizens react to an increasingly nationalized digital environment they live in. Our paper seeks to advance these debates both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, it links debates on digital sovereignty with debates on digital and platform nationalism. Empirically, we draw on interviews and digital diaries with 30 participants from Ukraine, Brazil and the UK to examine how ordinary people experience the manifestations of digital sovereignty – ranging from geo-blocking to the proliferation of domestically owned digital platforms – in their everyday life. We address both discursive and routine dimensions, examining what people say about their national identity and the way it relates to their digital media use, as well as the way they use (and choose between) different digital platforms and devices. Our approach throws into sharp relief the tensions between the imagined placelessness of digital media promoted by the digital tech industry and embraced by many of our participants, and the increasingly nationalised reality of life in a world of platform nations. To put it differently, our study connects macro-level discussions on digital sovereignty and nationalism with the enactment and reproduction of national identities and routines on a micro-level. We emphasize that platform nations should be understood as lived environments rather than abstract architectures or symbolic representations, thus opening new paths to understanding how nationalism persists and is reconfigured through engagement with digital technologies.

CDE14 Media Dynamics, (Visual) Politics, and the Communication of Public Crises

PP 0843 Society's awareness of the foreign development aid in the context of wartime communication patterns: The case of Ukraine

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The beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 marked an all-time record in official development assistance (ODA) dispatched all over the world (USD 204 billion). According to OECD, the critical factors behind the surge in 2022 and post–2022 foreign aid numbers were: 1) hosting refugees within donor countries, 2) a jump in aid to Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion (OECD:2024). Over the course of the following years to date, Ukraine became the largest recipient of international aid ever for any single country in a single year. This marked the first time that a European country has held the leading position among aid recipients since the Marshall Plan after World War II, and brought a significant change

in OECD countries' citizen awareness of foreign aid and its role in sustaining democratic transformations in the context of war on the borders of the European Union. The paper demonstrates some of the leading tendencies.

The change in awareness of the need and aims of foreign aid that occurred after the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian War happened in Ukrainian society, too, amidst the full-scale war. The recent representative survey (n = 1000) conducted in Ukraine in August 2025 showed that a total of 73.5% of Ukrainians express a high (44.9%) or moderate (28.6%) level of interest in *the topic of foreign aid from the EU and the U.S.* This level of interest is comparable to the interest in *the topic of negotiations about ending the war* (85.4%) or *the updates on the front line situation* (87.9%). The survey brings together the framework of news consumption in a time of war, war news fatigue, and awareness of and interest in a variety of topics relevant ot the country's current news consumption priorities, including foreign development aid as a necessity for a society and ongoing democratic transformations, not only the military function of the country.

The paper examines the society's awareness and the role of media in it, using the case of foreign development aid awareness in the context of war and the challenges the war brings to the news consumption patterns in Ukraine. In addition to the survey's results, the in-depth semi-structured interviews with the representatives of leading Ukrainian SCOs (n = 6) are provided to discuss the role of foreign development aid in the Ukrainian society and sustaining the country's reforms towards democratisation during the hardships of wartime and Ukraine's EU integration. Thus, the paper incorporates a mixed-method research design to look into the research question of the society's awareness of foreign aid in the context of wartime communication patterns in the Ukrainian society.

CDE14 Media Dynamics, (Visual) Politics, and the Communication of Public Crises

PP 0844 Cardboard evidence: Visual accountability in Bulgaria's 2025 anti-government protests

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This paper examines protest signage as a vernacular medium of democratic accountability during Bulgaria's 2025 demonstrations against the draft state budget and the sitting government. Rather than treating placards as disposable slogans, the study approaches them as civic interfaces where citizens compress fiscal critique, constitutional language, and participation cues into portable visuals that circulate between the street and social media.

Three research questions guide the analysis: (1) Which frames dominate the signs (tax justice and redistribution; anti-corruption and stewardship; civil liberties and rule of law; European anchoring and sovereignty)? (2) To what extent do signs incorporate "design-for-trust" features- on-sign evidence such as numbers, article/paragraph references, dates and reading stages, and QR/URL links- and how are these staged to sustain credibility under polarization? (3) What calls-to-action (CTAs) appear, and how often are they procedural (naming channels, committees, deadlines) rather than attitude-only appeals?

A purposive corpus of publicly shared photographs and livestream captures from multiple protest days in 2025 is assembled and de-duplicated. Each sign is coded as a visual artifact with a structured rubric: frame(s); design-for-trust components (legal badge, versioning, QR/URL, authorship, procedural context); CTA type and specificity; affect register (indignant, ironic, playful); language (Bulgarian/English); and materiality (handmade versus professionally printed). The analytic strategy combines descriptive patterns with qualitative multimodal vignettes that reconstruct the micro-composition of "message - evidence- action," and traces basic platform spillovers when images are reposted with captions and hashtags.

Preliminary patterns indicate three contributions. First, democratic accounting by design: many signs embed numbers, line items, or receipt/ledger metaphors and pair them with small, checkable anchors (a committee name, an article reference), producing screenshot-resistant claims. Second, procedurality as mobilization: beyond expressive dissent, a notable subset of signs specifies institutional coordinates (committee, reading stage, consultation window) that migrate into social captions, increasing the likelihood that attention routes toward eligible participation (comments, submissions, attendance). Third, humor as shield and solvent: irony, puns, and meme intertext reduce confrontation costs while puncturing official narratives; their persuasive bite strengthens when tethered to compact facts.

For the Communication and Democracy field, the contribution is a portable coding rubric that operationalizes credibility as an artifact-level property and links it to concrete participation pathways. The talk closes with implications for documenting and designing verifiable signs (for CSOs, journalists, and archives), ethical notes on image use, and suggestions for comparative extension across Central and Eastern European budget cycles.

CDE14 Media Dynamics, (Visual) Politics, and the Communication of Public Crises

PP 0845 Where topics take off: Tracing temporal impulse dynamics in cross-platform crisis communication

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Global crises produce volatile information environments in which breaking news, uncertainty, and misleading content circulate across news media and multiple social media platforms. Journalistic crisis coverage is crucial for providing reliable orientation, yet audiences increasingly combine sources across platforms, often encountering fragmented and

asynchronous topic trajectories. Social media discussions can supply timely eyewitness information but also introduce "frame breakers" that challenge journalistic routines and potentially affect reporting quality. While research on intermedia agenda setting highlights mutual influences between outlets, it remains unclear how topic dynamics between news media and distinct platform ecosystems unfold over time across different crisis types, and whether topic diffusion is primarily driven by journalistic gatekeepers or by platform-specific publics.

This study offers a content-driven, temporal approach to tracing cross-platform topic diffusion by reconstructing topic paths and estimating directional dependencies between platforms. A key contribution is the comparative design across multiple crises that differ in temporal structure: we analyze both slow-burning crises (economic crisis, climate crisis, refugee crisis) and fast-burning crises (the war in Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East). This allows us to assess whether cross-platform information flows follow crisis-transcending patterns or whether topic dynamics systematically vary between gradual, long-duration crises and rapidly escalating conflict events.

For each crisis, we collected German-language data from news media and the platforms Instagram, Mastodon, Reddit, Telegram, and X between August 1 and October 9, 2024. Data were gathered using crisis-specific keyword lists (Instagram, Mastodon, X), curated subreddit lists (Reddit), and selected channel lists (Telegram). After merging platform datasets per crisis, we first extracted thematic structures with transformer-based topic modeling (BERTopic) and conducted a qualitative validation of the 20 most prevalent topics per case. We then constructed platform-level time series of topic prevalence and modeled temporal dependencies with multivariate time-series analysis. Directional influence between platforms was assessed using Granger causality tests, and impulse–response functions were used to estimate the magnitude and persistence of topic impulses as they propagate across platforms. This approach enables us to identify when a platform tends to lead, follow, amplify, or remain insulated from a topic's trajectory.

Across crises, we identify four recurrent temporal patterns of cross-platform topic dynamics: (1) followed paths, where topics originate on one platform and appear later elsewhere with a lag; (2) escalating foreign sparks, where escalation on one platform is triggered by impulses emerging on another; (3) parallel paths, characterized by synchronized trajectories across platforms; and (4) single-path escalation, where topics remain largely platform-specific. Comparing slow- and fast-burning crises indicates that rapidly escalating events more often produce sharp impulse cascades and quicker cross-platform jumps, whereas slow-burning crises exhibit longer, more persistent topic cycles and stronger platform segmentation.

Overall, the study advances a comparative, multi-crisis perspective on cross-platform agenda dynamics and provides a typology of temporal topic diffusion patterns. Practically, the findings underscore the need for cross-platform monitoring in crisis reporting to detect early escalations, distinguish synchronized diffusion from organic uptake, and prevent speculative framings from stabilizing unchecked.

CDE14 Media Dynamics, (Visual) Politics, and the Communication of Public Crises

PP 0846 How media repertoires affect climate literacy. Information diversity and the epistemic function of deliberative systems

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Deliberative democracy depends on informed publics capable of engaging with complex information through discourse and public reasoning (Bächtiger et al., 2018). Climate change exemplifies this challenge, as it requires citizens to navigate pluralistic media environments where legacy outlets, professional influencers, interest organizations, and alternative sources coexist on social platforms (Blomberg et al., 2021; Dikmen, 2020; Hautea et al., 2021; Marquardt & Bäckstrand, 2022). Yet it remains underexplored how different patterns of media consumption relate to climate literacy and thus to citizens' capacity for meaningful deliberative participation.

This paper connects deliberative systems theory with media repertoire research to examine how self-assessed media use patterns relate to differentiated forms of climate knowledge. Following the systemic turn in deliberative theory (Mansbridge, 1999; Mansbridge et al., 2012), we conceptualize news media repertoires at the individual level and their relation to the media ensemble at the societal level as serving the epistemic function of deliberative systems, which is to enable fact-informed preference formation based on logic and consideration of diverse perspectives (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017). We ask: How do media repertoires relate to objective climate knowledge across different domains (causes, consequences, political responses) (Hoppe et al., 2018; Taddicken & Reif, 2016)? What is the relationship between media use patterns and subjective climate information assessments? Which configurations of media sources and news curation practices support climate literacy to improve deliberation?

We analyze survey data from a large-scale research project (N = 1,038), combining objective knowledge tests covering 16 items across three climate domains with subjective information assessments and detailed media repertoire measures spanning eight source types (TV 69%, radio 66%, web/social/conversations 60% each, print 35%, AI 23%, podcasts 20%). We also examine news curation practices (duty to keep informed, news avoidance, news finds me) as potential moderators. Experience sampling method data across twelve waves provides longitudinal context for media use and topic prioritization patterns.

This research contributes empirically grounded insights into how media diversity shapes the epistemic quality of deliberative systems in climate politics. By examining the interplay between media repertoires, news curation practices, and differentiated knowledge outcomes, the paper advances theoretical understanding of deliberative capacity building while offering practical implications for climate communication strategies aimed at supporting informed public discourse.

CDE15 Contested Speech, State Authority, and Resistance in Digital Publics

PP 0952 Instrumentalised confusion: How façade democracy envisions freedom of speech and censorship. The case of Russia

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In the aftermath of the Cold War and the impending dissolution of the Soviet Union, political regimes have increasingly displayed characteristics of ambiguity and hybridity. Fukuyama (1989) pronounced the triumph of Western liberal democracy in the ideological struggle; however, many non-democratic regimes present themselves as democratic by adhering to formal principles, which aids their survival in an open international environment and market conditions (Guriev & Treisman, 2020). Hybrid regimes blend democratic institutions with a "facade" of democratic practices to legitimise their procedures (Schedler, 2002). As a result, the meanings and performances of freedom of speech and censorship vary significantly in façade democracies compared to genuine democracies. In democracies, leadership changes systematically, whereas in hybrid regimes, leaders can implement long-term strategies. This dynamic complicates explicit censorship, as regimes face high transactional costs (Corduneanu-Huci & Hamilton, 2022) and the risk of public backlash, prompting a shift over time toward more covert methods of censorship (Gehlbach & Sonin, 2014; Little, 2017; Shadmehr & Bernhardt, 2015; Roberts, 2018).

This paper argues that politically empowered actors in façade democracies do not entirely reject the values of liberal democracies, such as freedom of speech. Rather, they interpret and utilise these concepts as reactive measures to both internal and external pressures. By examining contemporary Russian discourse—particularly through the lens of Russian authorities and state media—I illustrate how "freedom of speech" and "censorship" are (de)constructed and various interpretations are curated for instrumental purposes.

The Russian Federation exemplifies a façade democracy characterised by undeclared, de facto censorship. In this context, authorities employ various tactics based on the source of perceived threats: external or internal. They accuse European countries and the USA of hypocrisy regarding censorship (e.g., blocking RT in Europe), deny allegations of suppressing free speech by invoking the rule of law (TASS, 2021), and justify censorship in a "war state" while criminalising the term "war" (Article 207.3 of the Criminal Code). These contradictory narratives serve as tools for non-democratic regimes, reshaping the concepts of "freedom of speech" and "censorship" to further their internal and external agendas.

To investigate the fluidity of these concepts, I employ critical discourse analysis, analysing interviews, public statements, and state-financed media articles. In a volatile political context, "censorship" and "freedom of speech" may lose their significance, becoming mere rhetorical constructs. This phenomenon contributes to the degradation of democratic institutions, undermining the rule of law and clear values, as illustrated in the Russian case study.

I also introduce the notion of proxy censorship, which is pertinent in façade democracies. This type of censorship is often concealed behind a façade that mimics democratic practices, lending credibility to pseudo-democratic processes (Schedler, 2002). Adopting Darnton's (2014) narrower definition of censorship, I contend that the ambiguity and "conceptual stretching" of contemporary censorship obscure essential elements necessary for a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in these regimes, leading to misinterpretations of freedom of speech and expression.

CDE15 Contested Speech, State Authority, and Resistance in Digital Publics

PP 0953 Feeling safe, feeling heard: Exploring customizable moderation and its effects on online discourse quality

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Social media platforms have long been seen as potential infrastructures for inclusive and democratic public discourse. However, rising misinformation and online norm-violations have challenged this promise, as users perceive and respond to harmful content differently (e.g., Cinelli et al., 2021; Strippel et al., 2023; Bormann, 2022). This diversity of norms creates a central tension for platform governance: how to mitigate harm without overstepping legal boundaries or restricting freedom of expression. Traditional top-down moderation approaches often struggle to balance these goals, particularly for "borderline" or legally permissible yet harmful content.

To address this challenge, in part, platforms are increasingly exploring user-self-configured, customizable moderation approaches. Features such as toggles and filters allow users to selectively limit exposure to content they find harmful, giving them more control over their online experience (Jhaver & Zhang, 2023). While prior studies have explored users' preferences for such systems, little is known about how they actually use these tools in practice and whether this usage

influences important core objectives in content moderation, such as perceived safety or feelings of empowerment to participate in and be open to varying opinions in online discussions.

The work-in-progress examines these questions using a planned pre-registered, controlled online experiment simulating a social media environment. Participants will be randomly assigned to a customizable moderation condition, in which they actively configure content filters via toggles, or a fixed moderation condition, in which moderation rules are standardized. The experiment will measure actual behavior in adjusting moderation settings, as well as participants' perceptions of safety and empowerment. Empowerment is conceptualized along two dimensions: the comfortability to speak up in discussions and the open-mindedness to others' perspectives, both of which are central to fostering constructive online deliberation. Data will be collected from a representative sample of Austrian adults, attention checks and exclusion criteria will ensure data quality. All procedures follow Open Science principles, including IRB approval, pre-registration, manipulation checks, and validated measures of the dependent variables.

This work-in-progress aims to advance prior research by moving beyond stated preferences to examine whether user-configurable moderation produces tangible behavioral and perceptual effects. By systematically investigating how users interact with customizable moderation features and how these interactions shape both their perceptions of moderation and the quality of online discourse, the study seeks to foster healthier democratic online spaces where participatory mechanisms support constructive dialogue while mitigating harm in today's increasingly platformized society.

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CDE15 Contested Speech, State Authority, and Resistance in Digital Publics

PP 0954 Resistance as a narrative: Far-right alternative media storytelling and the co-constructed myth of resistance

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Resistance as a narrative: Far-right alternative media storytelling and the co-constructed myth of resistance

Far-right actors frequently portray themselves as victims of oppressive elites and portray their actions as resistance against an oppressive system. While this self-identification has been researched as a common theme in far-right and conspiracy-related groups (Zehring & Domahidi, 2023), it has not yet been researched as a *co-constructed story* based on a variety of different contributions by far-right actors. This paper argues that if resistance is presented in the form of a narrative, it is even more convincing: It assigns roles (i.e., protagonist and antagonist), establishes moral meaning, and allows far-right actors to draw on myths of heroic resistance. Understanding resistance as a narrative reveals how far-right actors mobilize powerful plots such as the hero´s journey and (national) myths of resistance against authoritarian regimes, thereby appropriating narrative techniques comparable with those analyzed in literature in the context of anti-colonial resistance (Harlow, 1986).

To get a better understanding of far-right communication strategies, we analyze them as *narratives* (unit of analysis) and distinguish them from co-constructed *myths*. Narratives are defined as representations of a causally connected sequence of events (Abbott, 2020; Prince, 1982) and are generally characterized by thematic closure, a narrative structure (including tension-building composition, protagonist role, antagonist role), and narrative stylistic devices (amongst others, Bal, 2017). In contrast, we use the term myth to refer to socially and culturally deeply rooted narratives whose content is widely known and agreed upon (Flood, 2002).

We analyzed 25 articles from far-right alternative news media sites and 791 comments on the platform X. Using qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), we identified how media actors and regular users assign narrative roles, establish plot structures, and draw on mythic repertoires. This allows us to examine how resistance is narratively constructed and then amplified.

The case study focuses on the arrest of German far-right YouTuber Shlomo Finkelstein in August 2023 for incitement to hatred and illustrates a fully developed resistance narrative with a heroic arc. Articles in far-right alternative media assign clear roles with Finkelstein as a persecuted protagonist and the state as an unjust antagonist. The prosecution, imprisonment, and alleged harassment in prison are meant to demonstrate the hero's moral steadfastness. The early release from prison provides a positive resolution and moral lesson about staying true to one's cause and solidarity within the far-right community. Remarkably, user comments amplify and expand this media narrative, situating it within established mythic repertoires: they draw explicit parallels to past totalitarian regimes and compare Finkelstein to well-known resistance figures. This co-construction elevates an individual's struggle into a broader moral struggle.

The case study shows how episodic events are transformed into a resistance narrative and how users amplify these stories by linking them to an established historical myth. Resistance thus shifts from a situational claim to a mythic principle. It serves as an identity resource and mobilizing device within the far-right, and thereby becomes part of democratic backsliding.

CDE15 Contested Speech, State Authority, and Resistance in Digital Publics

PP 0955 Debating antisemitism and political criticism during the Israel–Gaza war: Online news coverage, political narratives, and Jewish experiences in Turkey

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This study examines how political and media discourse surrounding the Israel–Gaza war (2023–2024) circulates across the public sphere in Turkey and how these narratives are experienced and interpreted by Jewish communities in everyday public encounters. Focusing on the war coverage of two ideologically distinct online newspapers, the study analyses how political elite discourse shapes media framing and how these framings resonate beyond formal political communication. Rather than assuming a direct causal relationship between elite discourse and antisemitism, the analysis foregrounds the disjuncture between media–political narratives and their street-level interpretations.

The theoretical framework engages critically with contemporary debates on the conceptual boundaries of antisemitism, drawing on the IHRA Working Definition, the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA), and the Nexus Project, alongside scholarship on "new antisemitism" (Cotler, 2002; Wistrich, 1990; Lerman, 2022). While these approaches diverge in their treatment of Israel-related speech, they converge on the importance of contextual interpretation and the distinction between political criticism of Israel and the targeting of Jewish individuals or communities. Building on this literature, the study conceptualizes antisemitism as a relational and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by the interaction between globally circulating war discourses and nationally specific political, historical, and media dynamics in Turkey (Aviv, 2017; Bali, 2013, 2021; Nefes, 2015; Öneren-Özbek, 2024). This perspective enables an analysis that accounts for both global patterns and locally embedded meanings without reducing the phenomenon to either level alone.

Methodologically, the study combines Critical Discourse Analysis of 1,319 news stories with in-depth interviews conducted with Turkish Jewish opinion leaders. This research design places media and political discourse in conversation with minority perspectives, allowing textual findings to be examined alongside lived experiences. The media analysis shows that political and media discourse largely remains within the register of criticism of Israeli policies and avoids explicit references to Turkey's Jewish population. However, interview findings reveal a marked divergence between media discourse and everyday experience. Participants highlight how ambiguous and repetitive frames—particularly regarding Zionism and the generalization of Jews—blur the boundaries between political critique and antisemitic targeting in daily interactions. Derogatory "Zionist" tropes in mainstream discourse thus unintentionally marginalize local Jews, increasing their vulnerability to street-level hostility.

By analyzing how political and media discourses circulate into street-level interactions during times of crisis such as the Israel–Gaza war, the study conceptualizes antisemitism not only as a media issue but as a democratic one. In polarization-prone public spheres, politically charged discourses are more likely to be reinterpreted through identity-based distinctions, producing uneven risks for minority communities. A core contribution of the study lies in documenting the lived experience of Turkey's Jews, marked by a condition of "conditional belonging" in which safety and recognition become contingent on regional developments. Interviewees articulate a range of coping and survival strategies—including strategic silence, cautious visibility, selective engagement with state institutions, and emerging forms of digital resistance—highlighting the fragility of democratic belonging under conditions of conflict.

CDE15 Contested Speech, State Authority, and Resistance in Digital Publics

PP 0956 Auditing state authority: YouTube cop-baiting as dangerous media

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The paper explores the phenomenon of sousveillance, defined as the practice whereby ordinary citizens observe and record public spaces as a countermeasure to institutional surveillance. While the maintenance of public order is formally entrusted to state institutions such as the police, this allocation creates a structural asymmetry of power. Sousveillance partially disrupts this imbalance by enabling citizens to hold authorities publicly accountable—a capacity central to democratic theory. A prominent modality of sousveillance is cop-baiting, which involves deliberately staged police–citizen encounters, typically organised around photographing and recording public spaces to expose discrepancies between the law's formal provisions and its practical enforcement.

Empirically, the article examines such encounters as documented by "auditors," YouTube content creators who specialise in staging interactions with law enforcement. Analysis of multiple episodes reveals recurrent failures of situational control by police officers, often resulting in unjustified escalation of conflict and various forms of misconduct. The study also considers official police responses to these recordings and selected judicial rulings addressing the cases.

The phenomenon is interpreted through Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems perspective, particularly his thesis on "taming the dangerous classes." This concept refers to the state's management of social groups whose collective action could destabilise the world-system's foundational dynamic: the endless accumulation of capital. Such management combines coercion and concession, aiming not to eliminate conflict but to contain it within politically and economically tolerable bounds. Crucially, this process has an epistemic dimension, realised through ideologies that shape how social reality is interpreted and contested, persuading the population to remain relatively patient (Wallerstein 2000).

From this perspective, sousveillance practices—and the media forms through which they circulate—pose a challenge to these epistemic mechanisms of governance. By exposing recurrent gaps between legal norms and their enforcement, auditors' recordings undermine interpretive frameworks that sustain institutional legitimacy. To conceptualise this dynamic, the article introduces the notion of dangerous media: media practices that destabilise the epistemic and discursive boundaries within which state authority is rendered intelligible and legitimate. Unlike oppositional media, their disruptive potential does not primarily derive from ideological content but from documenting routine institutional contradictions.

Auditors' YouTube channels exemplify dangerous media. Their recordings, durable and universally accessible, enable translocal and intersubjectively verifiable critique of policing practices, amplifying long-standing countercultural diagnoses of law enforcement. The article concludes by considering future trajectories: while some theorists view dangerous media as democratically empowering, a more pessimistic outlook anticipates intensified censorship and subtle epistemic coercion aimed at reasserting control over these disruptive practices.

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CDE16 Digital Publics, Protest, and Political Participation

PP 1051 A digital revolution wouldn't be a bad idea

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Throughout history, theorists have regularly turned to the language of *revolution* in order to process enormous and rapid processes of technological change. Just as we earlier had the Gutenberg revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the transistor revolution and the PC revolution, we are apparently in the throes of a biotech revolution, a quantum 3D printing revolution, a nanotechnology revolution and of course, an AI revolution. Thanks to an interconnected series of developments – including blockchain, robotics, quantum computing and increased processing power – the digital has, it seems, been particularly vigorous in fostering a series of 'revolutions' in all areas of social, economic and political life.

This ongoing conceptualization of a 'digital revolution' raises a whole number of questions: about winners and losers, strategy and tactics, the environmental cost and social impact. Indeed, the consequences of the 'digital revolution' are often seen in terms of negative developments for democracy – in the shape of an increase in disinformation and political polarisation – rather than the positive externalities one might expect from a radical transformation of the status quo. But it also begs another set of questions: what constitutes a revolution and what distinguishes revolutions from other descriptions of change and transformation? What might be the difference between quantitative and qualitative shifts, and between progressive and exponential forms of change, when it comes to the impact of the digital on society?

To speak of a wholehearted 'digital revolution' would suggest that we are in thrall to a new 'informational' mode of production generating social relations that are distinct from those that preceded it. The paper, therefore, considers the extent to which the digital has facilitated the transfer of power not within elite groups but to other social groups who have remained largely marginalised and disempowered. It addresses the question of whether power has shifted meaningfully from control of resources and decision-making by a tiny minority or whether residual relations of power remain intact, indeed strengthened, albeit facing novel challenges (such as those we anticipate from GenAI).

This paper is based on research from my new book on *Capitalism and the Media*. Drawing on the work of Marx, Schumpeter and Raymond Williams (as well as contemporary writers on AI), it explores the relationship between capitalism and technological innovation. It further analyses the language and claims made about the 'digital revolution' and suggests that they are all too often prone to a form of technological determinism that misrepresents technological innovation as an inevitable and relatively depoliticised process. It critiques this essentialised understanding of the digital and instead reflects on what a more robust sense of revolution would look like for contemporary democratic societies.

CDE16 Digital Publics, Protest, and Political Participation

PP 1052 From TikTok to the streets and back: Connecting online and offline #8M feminist protest

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Contemporary protest increasingly unfolds across interconnected online and offline arenas, where personalized, platform-mediated participation expands repertoires of contention by linking individualized expression to collective visibility and circulation beyond formal organizations and fixed collective identities. Within this context of digital transformation and reconfigured participatory pathways, this paper examines how platform-based practices intersect with street-level protest through an analysis of the global hashtag #8M on TikTok.

Traditionally associated with demonstrations for International Women's Day across diverse national contexts, the hashtag #8M functions as a key visibility device for feminist mobilization. On TikTok, at the time of data collection, the hashtag had generated more than four billion views, indicating its centrality within the platform's political and cultural ecosystem. Drawing on Askanius' typology of video activism, the study adopts a three-step qualitative research design attentive to TikTok's affordances and multimodal meaning-making. The analysis is based on a hashtag-based dataset of 2,000 #8M TikToks collected around International Women's Day, from which a purposive sample of 400 highly visible videos was selected for in-depth analysis. Using multimodal discourse analysis, the study examines how visual, audio, textual, and performative modes articulate protest meanings and strategies of visibility.

Findings show that #8M tiktoks operate as connective interfaces between street protest and platform participation, enabling both proximate and remote forms of engagement while facilitating transnational connections among feminist activists and audiences. Alongside videos documenting demonstrations or highlighting specific claims, users appropriate platform-native trends such as #getreadywithme and #makeupwithme, posting videos that document their preparation to attend protests. These videos provide practical guidance—ranging from how to draw feminist symbols to advice on safety and how to avoid police violence—while translating protest preparation into a highly shareable, algorithmically legible format that sustains visibility and collective identification.

At the same time, other creators deploy preparation-oriented videos as an alternative mode of participation when attending demonstrations is not feasible. Particularly among younger users facing constraints related to age, distance, safety, or parental control, these videos function as a means of expressing political presence and solidarity from a distance. In several cases, creators explicitly stage readiness for protest despite knowing they will not participate offline, embedding their performances within shared protest repertoires.

Theoretically, these findings challenge reductive critiques of slacktivism by demonstrating how platform-mediated participation can constitute meaningful democratic engagement when embedded in collective visibility, recognizable repertoires of contention, and transnational networks. By foregrounding the interplay between connective action, platform affordances, and protest visibility, the paper advances understanding of how contemporary feminist activism is negotiated across media environments within evolving democratic practices.

CDE16 Digital Publics, Protest, and Political Participation

PP 1053 Becoming citizens by design: Digital identification systems and the politics of access

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This paper analyzes how digital identification systems become sites of political struggle over inclusion in digital societies. As public service delivery is increasingly mediated through digital technologies, digital identification systems have become critical gateways to welfare, healthcare, education, and democratic participation in societies worldwide. Drawing on the case of DigiD, the Dutch digital identification system, this paper examines how its technological and cultural affordances shape citizens' experiences of access and reconfigure citizenship as a practical, instrumental relationship with the state.

The Dutch case highlights how digital identification systems produce new mechanisms of exclusion and contestation around access. In the Netherlands, digital identification is positioned not merely as a technical solution but as a cornerstone of a new governance model rooted in automation, reduced bureaucracy and individual agency. Yet despite high levels of digital literacy and internet coverage, a substantial number of people struggle to access and navigate online government services. Approximately 4.5 million of the country's 17.5 million residents experience difficulties finding information about digital government services and are unable to use online public services effectively (Hoevenagel & Joossen, 2022). In particular, the use of DigiD generates exclusionary effects, potentially leading citizens to exclusion and deprivation of public services, rights and benefits.

To better understand how citizens experience access in such digitally mediated states, this study draws on approximately 400 hours of field observations conducted during consultation hours at public libraries and community centers, as well as during digital skills courses offered in public libraries. These observations were carried out in both urban and rural

contexts across geographically distinct regions of the country. In addition, the study is based on 32 semi-structured interviews with citizens who experience difficulties accessing public services online. This ethnographic data is complemented by a systematic walkthrough of the DigiD system (Light et al., 2018), examining its interface design, registration procedures, authentication mechanisms, credential management, and account termination processes.

This paper mobilizes Foucauldian concepts of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) and responsibilization (Juhila et al., 2017), together with STS insights into affordances (Gibson, 2015), to examine how digital identification systems govern access and reconfigure citizenship in practice. We argue that DigiD does not merely verify users' identities but actively produces distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate users by embedding normative assumptions about competence, autonomy, and responsible citizenship into its design. These assumptions redistribute access to rights and services, turning digital identification into a site exclusion. The paper contributes by demonstrating how digital identification systems function as infrastructural politics, reshaping citizenship and inclusion through everyday encounters with digital government.

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CDE16 Digital Publics, Protest, and Political Participation

PP 1054 Protest against media as an instrument of media accountability

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In 2025, Serbian public service broadcaster RTS was blockaded for two weeks by demonstrators demanding fair coverage of student protests. A year earlier, demonstrations erupted in Hungary with calls for the "state propaganda factory" to be dismantled. Similar protests emerged in several European countries, including Italy, Poland, Greece, and Georgia, most commonly targeting public service media over perceived journalistic transgressions and a lack of professional autonomy. Amid widespread institutional and legitimacy crises, traditional (self-)regulatory mechanisms in journalism are increasingly perceived as ineffective, fueling citizens' dissatisfaction with media and mobilizing protest against professional and ethical breaches. While there is a substantial body of literature examining how media cover political protests, far less is known about what happens when the media itself becomes the target of protest. This contribution explores the potential of protest behavior to serve as a media accountability mechanism. The analysis begins with desk research documenting cases of protests against media organizations in Europe between 2008 and 2025. This timeframe captures key events and processes that have shaped contemporary legitimacy crises in journalism and democracy, including the global financial crisis, the rise of social media and artificial intelligence, democratic backsliding, and the proliferation of fake news discourse alongside the normalization of anti-media rhetoric. Across cases, we examine protest initiators, motives, targeted media types, protest duration and repertoires, as well as institutional and public responses. Theoretically, the paper draws on scholarship on political participation, social movements, and media accountability to conceptualize protest behavior as a distinct media accountability instrument in relation to both institutional (e.g., press councils and ombudspersons) and non-institutional forms (e.g., media boycotts and news comments). Finally, we examine selected cases in greater depth to illustrate how citizens mobilize to defend public interest journalism, while also showing how similar protest practices can be co-opted by populist actors to intensify anti-media rhetoric and exert undue pressure on news organizations. While we acknowledge that protest may entail democratic corrective, disruptive, and strategic potentials, we focus on its capacity to articulate accountability claims directed at media. The paper concludes by outlining a research agenda for studying protest-driven media accountability across different political and media systems.

CDE16 Digital Publics, Protest, and Political Participation

PP 1055 Build-a-Barron: The collective construction of political Persona. A case study of fan audience perceptions of Barron Trump

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In an increasingly politically polarized world veering towards social media, the phenomenon of fandom in politics has garnered significant attention due to eroding boundaries between popular and political culture and a turn to "democratainment" (Van Zoonen, 2005), which have brought the proliferation of so-called "celebrity politicians". Research into political fandom has examined the phenomenon both in terms of "fan-based citizenship" (Hinck, 2019), or organized media

fandoms turning to civic action; as well as politicized fans (Dean, 2017), who show support for politicians by engaging in transformative participatory fandom practices (Jenkins, 1992) such as fanfiction, fan-produced stories that draw from the source "canon" text. Reactionary politics supporters particularly engage in these to construct far-right conspiracy theories like QAnon (Reindhart, 2022).

However, politicized fandom's impact on politicians' public personas remains less explored. To address this gap, this study examines discussions of Barron Trump, youngest son of US president Donald Trump, on the MAGA fan forum *The Donald*. Barron presents a boundary case, as despite little public information that could constitute fandom "canon" being available on him he has nonetheless garnered a following that hails him as the next president. By asking the question "How does political fandom happen when the core canon is extremely limited?," this paper employs qualitative content analysis to follow the process of real person fanfiction (RPF) construction, exploring the extent to which users' perceptions of Barron are grounded on the limited canon available and how fandom supplements the canon to create an office-worthy political persona.

Findings indicate that political fandom can exist regardless of scarce canon information available. Limited canon is circumvented by fans transplanting canon from Barron's environment (primarily his family and the MAGA movement) onto him complemented with comparisons to pop culture characters. Fan audiences do not necessarily need a politician's character traits to be openly displayed or stated in information produced by their team or media coverage. Rather, they are effectively capable of constructing their dream politician's persona almost autonomously, supplementing it with canon sourced elsewhere and their own constructions. This renders factual information on the politician subordinate to that which confirms the persona being built, potentially making fandom a gateway to disinformation and conspiracy theories. Barron's case also shows that some of the unverified traits that fans project onto their idol can have worrisome implications, such as legitimizing inheritance to transfer political power, which exacerbate some of the negative impacts on political violence and public trust that have already been associated with polarized politics.

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CDE17 Platform Polarization, Algorithmic Publics, and Political Expression

PP 1150 Less mobilizing than polarizing: Populist appeals of top candidates and audience responses on TikTok during the 2025 German federal election campaign

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In the 2025 German federal election, young voters aged 18–24 showed strong support for populist parties. The Left and the AfD ranked first and second in this age group, receiving 25% and 21% of the vote (infratest dimap, 2025). This development has fueled concerns about political polarization, particularly in light of the strong presence of these parties on TikTok, which has become a central source of political information for young people (Böhmer et al., 2025). In this context, social media platform logics and populist communication strategies intersect. Platform algorithms tend to favor emotional, polarizing, and problem-centered content, which is more likely to generate interaction and reach (Klinger et al., 2023). Research further suggests that young users are disproportionately exposed to negative content, which may foster pessimistic worldviews and dissatisfaction with society (Kaye & Johnson, 2024; Sharma et al., 2022). Such dissatisfaction is associated with increased support for populist parties (Giebler et al., 2021).

Populist communication reinforces these dynamics by emphasizing crisis narratives, dramatization, and pessimistic visions of the future, often combined with blame attribution to elites or outgroups (Brubaker, 2017; Hameleers et al., 2017). Alongside pessimistic, future-oriented problem portrayals, recent research has highlighted nostalgia as an additional emotional component of populist appeals. Populist actors idealize a supposedly better past through nostalgia and use it as a reference point to restore lost stability or popular sovereignty (Frischlich et al., 2023; Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2018; van Prooijen et al., 2022). Pessimism and nostalgia can thus be understood as complementary emotional resources within populist communication.

Against this backdrop, this study investigates how top candidates in Germany used TikTok during the 2025 federal election campaign and examines how pessimistic and nostalgic appeals, in combination with populist communication, relate to audience responses on social media. Rather than assuming that populism alone drives engagement, we explore how different communicative elements interact with platform dynamics and audience responses.

We draw on a quantitative content analysis of all 770 TikTok videos posted by the seven top candidates of all major parties, from the dissolution of the governing coalition until election day. Videos were coded for populist communication,

future-oriented pessimistic portrayals of societal problems, and nostalgic references. These content characteristics were linked to engagement indicators (likes, comments, shares) and to the emotional tone of user comments, assessed using RoBERTa-based sentiment analysis and LIWC measures. All analyses control for exposure and candidate-level differences using multilevel models.

Results show substantial variation between candidates in their use of populist, pessimistic, and nostalgic appeals. However, these differences translate only weakly into engagement. Nostalgic communication is consistently associated with higher levels of commenting, whereas populist and pessimistic communication do not function as independent drivers of engagement volume. Instead, populist communication is strongly associated with more negative emotional reactions in user comments.

Overall, the findings challenge the assumption that populist communication constitutes a universal engagement strategy on TikTok, suggesting that it is less mobilizing than polarizing and that platform dynamics and existing audience structures are key in shaping political engagement.

CDE17 Platform Polarization, Algorithmic Publics, and Political Expression

PP 1151 Shifting democratic grounds: Folk theories of algorithmic news selection on social media among young abstainers

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Research on democracy and digital media has largely focused on online participatory cultures and renewed forms of political activism, while scant scholarly attention has been paid to the media practices of citizens who do not participate in democratic life (Andersen et al., 2021; Woodstock, 2014). Yet non-participation represents one of the most significant threats to the quality of democracy. It is a complex phenomenon, as it can take traditional forms—such as abstention from voting—without necessarily indicating political disinterest or weak civic engagement. The limited body of research on the relationship between non-participation and digital media complicates efforts to counter this growing threat.

This study addresses this gap by examining the informational experiences of young Italians who were potential first-time voters in the 2022 Italian general elections but chose not to vote. Given that young people's encounters with political information are increasingly shaped by social media algorithms, the study focuses on their experiences of algorithmic news selection, drawing on the concept of "folk theories" (Eslami et al., 2016).

Folk theories are understood as cultural resources through which individuals make sense of how media operate and shape their engagement with digital information environments (Nielsen, 2016; Siles et al., 2020; Toff & Nielsen, 2018; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2020). Studies of folk theories about digital algorithms remain limited and tend to focus on highly educated populations in high digital literacy contexts, overlooking citizens at the margins of political participation.

Focusing on Italy – a country with low digital literacy levels (European Commission, 2024) – this study aims to (1) identify the folk theories articulated by abstaining youth regarding algorithmic news curation on social media; (2) explore the contexts in which these folk theories are formed (civic cultures and reasons for abstention); (3) examine whether these young citizens develop strategies to resist or reinforce algorithmic news selection.

Eighteen qualitative interviews were conducted in May 2023 using a variation sampling strategy to account for sociodemographic differences.

An inductive and iterative analysis identified three main folk theories: "Practical but limiting algorithms", seen as useful yet restrictive of users' perspectives; "Predatory algorithms", perceived as attention-maximizing mechanisms; and "Functional algorithms", viewed as effective tools for delivering relevant information.

While participants showed widespread awareness of algorithmic personalization, differences emerged between "critical" and "detached" abstainers. Both groups expressed skepticism toward algorithmic news environments, potentially reinforcing political disengagement, but with distinct emphases. Critical youth—politically interested but disillusioned—frame algorithms as predatory and question platform asymmetries, while detached youth—whose abstention reflects broader civic disengagement—emphasize the impoverishment of the information experience. Rebuilding trust therefore requires differentiated strategies that consider these distinct folk theories and the contexts of non-participation in which they emerge. Finally, unlike findings from high digital literacy contexts, these theories appear to generate digital resignation rather than resistance.

These findings contribute to research on non-participation and shifting information environments, while offering insights for policymakers and educators. Folk theories can inform platform transparency policies and support digital literacy initiatives aimed at fostering critical engagement with algorithmic systems rather than resignation.

CDE17 Platform Polarization, Algorithmic Publics, and Political Expression

PP 1152 Seeing red – disruptive right-wing publics and polarisation in TikTok-comments

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TikTok is currently one of the most topical social media platforms in modern democracies due to its ability to reach large, young audiences and the concerns over outside influences and the algorithmic nature of feeds. In Finland, the parliamentary elections of 2023 caused a major surge for the platform. At the same time, polarisation is also a trending subject in European social media and society, with TikTok being discussed as one of the drivers of this division. This study investigates whether TikTok comments reveal polarisation through the formation of disruptive right-wing publics alongside publics acting against disruptions during election campaigns. The theoretical framework of the study is based on existing work on right-wing counterpublics (for example Reijven et al. 2020, Toepfl & Piwoni 2015), with the added sensibility of utilising the concept of disruptive publics instead of counterpublics due to their importance to marginalised groups (Jackson & Kreiss 2023).

The dataset of the study consists of 58 TikTok videos from the five Finnish parliamentary parties that were present on TikTok before the 2023 parliamentary elections, along with the 3813 comments received by these videos. The comments are analysed through a framework designed to uncover right-wing discursive patterns, with the goal of identifying disruptive right-wing publics that form in the comment sections of TikTok videos. Disruptive publics are formed through calls for reformation, counter-positioning or identifying with a disruptive public. This study also seeks to uncover the concise language used by commenters and thus identify what constitutes different blocs through vocabulary choices.

The results indicate that a large disruptive public consisting mainly of right-wing commenters was present on TikTok. This public opposed other affiliations mainly by self-identifying with a disruptive public, even though other forms of disruptive commentary were also utilised. The language used by these publics was clearly tilted towards a confrontational position, thus polarising the comment sections. The study also revealed that there did not seem to be a singular right-wing disruptive public, but rather one that was driven by the nationalistic Finns Party, as evidenced by the language present on other right-wing parties' comment sections. On a broader scale the results indicate that disruptive publics have effects on both polarisation and discussion quality on TikTok, and that comment-based discussions are relevant spaces of identity work on a video-first platform.

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COH01 Broadcasting: Public and Colonial Histories

PP 0750 Creating national soundscapes under colonial rule: Broadcasting in African languages in the Portuguese empire

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This paper discusses how the first programmes broadcast in African languages in Mozambique and Angola brought an end to more than two decades of all-white radio in the Portuguese Empire in Africa. First aired in the late 1950s on private radio clubs, such programmes altered the colonial broadcasting *status quo* by allowing indigenous languages, music and oral traditions to be listened to on the airwaves. For this to be possible the radio clubs hired black announcers and producers who mastered the local languages that until then had been labeled as uncivilized by the colonial regime and therefore unworthy of being spoken on the microphones.

The programmes aired in African languages were received with high enthusiasm by the black population, especially in the capitals of Maputo and Luanda, where radio sets were more widely available in clubs and coffee shops. It was in these collective spaces that people would gather to listen and even to dance to the music aired in the broadcasts. As the paper will discuss, the success achieved by the programmes in Ronga (Mozambique) and Umbundu (Angola) was soon captured by the colonial regime and transformed into a tool of colonial control. Not only did the Portuguese authorities use such broadcasts as a symbol of how they were supposedly embracing the indigenous cultures of the African population, but they also initiated their own programmes in these same languages as an attempt to silence the voices of those who demanded the independence of the colonial territories.

Based on archival research conducted in Lisbon, Luanda, and Maputo, and on oral interviews with former radio producers and announcers, the presentation will argue that the programmes first aired in the mother tongues of the black populations in the Portuguese Empire were marked by ambivalence: while they allowed for a preview of Mozambican and Angolan soundscapes, they also served the colonial agenda by promoting Portuguese language and culture along with the regime's propaganda. The historiographic research that will be presented will be discussed through the framework of entangled media histories (Cronqvist & Hilgert, 2017) as it will be argued that the case of broadcasting in the Portuguese Empire can only be understood when considering that radio programmes were part of an assemblage of different media used both by the Portuguese regime and the independence movements during the 1950s and 1960s. Ultimately, the paper will question to what extent the broadcasts became a battlefield between those who aimed to use them to promote and those who aimed to counter the creation of African national soundscapes.

COH01 Broadcasting: Public and Colonial Histories

PP 0751 The denial of shame or acknowledging without avowing: An interpretation of the shifting positions of those responsible for the censorship and destruction by burning of a TV series

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The adaptation of Kemal Tahir's (1910–1973) *Tired Warrior* novel (hereafter *TW*) to a mini-series by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), its subsequent destruction by burning in 1983, and its eventual broadcast a decade later through a copy preserved from that burning, together constitute one of the most striking and revealing episodes in recent Turkish history.

The filming of *TW* began in late 1979 and took two years to complete. During production, the September 12, 1980 military coup took place, and the country was subsequently ruled for three years by a junta composed of senior officers of the Turkish Armed Forces. From the very beginning, the *TW* project became a subject of controversy both within TRT and in the national press. These debates intensified during the post-production phase, which continued under the military junta. Although *TW* had become increasingly contentious, post-production was somehow completed in May 1983. Nevertheless, the series was neither broadcast nor was any air date announced. A few months later, Macit Akman, the TRT Director General appointed by the junta government, told a journalist that *TW was destroyed by burning*. This statement triggered a long-standing controversy that continued well into the mid-1990s over who had ordered the burning of *TW* and why.

The debates surrounding the alleged "objectionable" nature of *TW* revolved around two main issues. The first set of objections concerned Kemal Tahir's worldview and his interpretation of Ottoman-Turkish history. The second set of objections related to how certain historical figures and events from the period between 1918 and 1920 were represented in *the novel and the series*. Despite all the controversies, the true reasons behind the destruction of *TW*, and the identities of those responsible, have remained unclear.

This paper proposes a conceptual framework for reading this process as a long, strangely *self-exculpatory* conversation that enables us to illuminate the shifting positions of the people responsible for the censorship and destruction of a cultural artefact. The historical resources including official statements, media coverage, memoirs, and interviews show a recurrent

pattern: the very actors who later admit that destroying a film is "unacceptable" simultaneously disown or dilute their own implication by appealing to institutional chains of command, conjunctural pressures, or the presumed self-evidence of the national interest. We call this pattern *acknowledging without avowing*: a mode of retrospective speech in which the wrong is named, yet shame, agency, and reparative responsibility are displaced.

For interpreting this entangled chain of hierarchy, responsibility and later denial, we build on Theodor Adorno's reflections on "coming to terms with the past" (Adorno 1998) and the speech-act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). We argue that such utterances perform precisely the opposite of what they seem to promise: instead of binding actors to the past, they de-particularize the act and distribute it across a faceless apparatus—exactly what happened here, where responsibility expands from TRT bureaucrats to the junta leadership until it becomes almost abstract.

COH01 Broadcasting: Public and Colonial Histories

PP 0752 Institutional shifts and media convergence: Latvian radio's path into unified public media

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In 2025, Latvian Radio marked its 100th anniversary—an emblematic moment that simultaneously signified the end of its existence as an independent public media institution. In the same year, Latvian Radio was legally integrated into a newly established unified public service media organisation, Latvian Public Media, alongside Latvian Television and digital platforms. This paper examines the historical and institutional significance of this transition, situating it within the long and complex trajectory of Latvian Radio's development from its founding in 1925 to its incorporation into a convergent public media structure.

Drawing on an empirical communication history approach, the study focuses on the final phase of institutional transformation between 2009 and 2025, while contextualising this period within Latvian Radio's century-long history. The analysis is based on archival documents, media policy texts, institutional reports, public debates, and selected oral history materials collected within the research project *Latvian Radio 100*. The *Latvian Radio 100* project represents a major scholarly collaboration between the University of Latvia and Latvian Public Media (LSM), led by Professor Vita Zelče and an interdisciplinary research team. As part of the centenary commemorations of Latvian Radio. The project produced a comprehensive history of Latvian Radio throughout its existence. This project makes a significant contribution to the study of Latvia's media history by offering an empirically grounded and widely accessible account of one of the country's most enduring public communication institutions.

Theoretically, the paper engages with media history scholarship on institutional continuity and change, including cyclical models of media development, to explore how historical legacies shape contemporary media transformations. The study employs a mixed historical methodology combining extensive archival research, analysis of periodical press and institutional documents, oral history interviews, and selected sociological surveys on media use and audience practices. This multi-source approach enables a contextualised reconstruction of Latvian Radio's institutional, political, and cultural development, as well as its changing relationship with audiences across different historical periods.

The findings highlight how the unification process was marked by shifting political, technological, and geopolitical conditions, as well as by internal professional tensions. Particular attention is paid to the symbolic and practical implications of institutional dissolution, including staff resistance, emotional attachments to the historic Radio House in Riga, and concerns over editorial autonomy within a larger organisational structure. The paper also addresses the closure of Latvian Radio 4, the Russian-language service, as a critical moment in the transformation process, reflecting broader debates on language, security, and public service media responsibilities in a changing geopolitical environment.

By examining the centenary of Latvian Radio as a moment of rupture rather than celebration alone, this study contributes to communication history by demonstrating how public media institutions negotiate continuity, memory, and legitimacy at times of structural change. More broadly, it responds to the ECC 2026 theme *Shifting Grounds* by showing how historical institutions are reconfigured through choices, connections, and contested futures in contemporary public service media systems.

COH01 Broadcasting: Public and Colonial Histories

PP 0753 COMMEM-CON: Analysing Dutch Commemorative Configurations Through Public News Broadcasting (1925–Present)

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Which events do societies publicly commemorate and why? This question has been central to the field of memory studies since the 1980s. What the available scholarship on the topic has shown is that public commemorations, on the (trans)national level and beyond, are fundamentally contested and subject to major shifts over time, in terms of what is

commemorated, how, and why. Assmann (1997) identified scholarship in this area as mnemohistory, i.e., the study of how public remembrance has evolved from past to present (Tamm, 2013).

While mnemohistory has become a prolific tradition in memory studies, most available studies provide historical analyses of specific case studies (see for example analyses of Dutch National Remembrance Day: Raaijmakers, 2018). What is lacking are broader studies that take a distant reading-approach as starting point, to provide wider overviews of how specific local, (trans)national and other, commemorative configurations have evolved over time. Studying how Dutch commemorative discourse has evolved via public news broadcasting since the emergence of the latter provides a promising starting point for such an approach.

In this paper, we present the preliminary findings of the CLARIAH fellowship project 'COMMEM-CON: Analysing Dutch Commemorative Configurations Through Public News Broadcasting (1925-Present)'. This project explores how distant reading methods, and digital text mining in particular, can be used to study mnemohistory. The main empirical question is how commemorative discourse in Dutch public news broadcasting has evolved since its early beginnings (for radio around 1925 and television around 1956). The study combines the study of historical culture and natural language processing (NLP) to analyse which people, events, and entities have been commemorated through Dutch public news broadcasting. The research uses the CLARIAH Media Suite to analyse a large corpus of radio and television news bulletins.

In this paper, we present the preliminary results of two key analyses: a Named Entity Recognition (NER) analysis to identify commemorated entities, and a Topic Modelling (TM) analysis to find main themes in public commemoration. We visualize the results using commemorative maps to show geographical patterns and mnemonic density graphs to display changes over time. This research aims to provide an innovative way of studying how public remembrance has evolved in Dutch media through the use of digital humanities methods.

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COH01 Broadcasting: Public and Colonial Histories

PP 0754 Tracing the evolution of discourse on the purposes of television archives of estonian public broadcasting

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Although television has been criticized for its ephemerality, it is its focus on the here and now that makes it so valuable as a memory medium. It records everyday life, leaving behind an invaluable collection of artefacts in its audiovisual archives. These in turn play an important role in the reproduction of cultural memory. Using television archives to make judgements about the culture and society in the past must, however, be approached with caution, as archives are never neutral collections. Technical and economic reasons, issues of archival appraisal and even chance and personal relationships can influence what has been preserved.

Although some of those topics have been studied before, the evolution of television archives remains largely unexplored in Estonia and other countries with similar histories in Eastern Europe. In addition, while a lot of the international literature focuses on looking back at the past from the present, this paper proposes an additional approach - using Foucauldian discourse analyses of institutional management documents from the past seven decades and qualitative interviews with current and former employees of the organisation. Document analysis helps to understand how the discourse on the purposes of television archives has changed over time and what conditions have influenced this evolution. Interviews are used for further contextualisation and explanation through lived experiences.

The paper shows that while today the archives of Estonian Public Broadcasting are often seen as a public good, their roles have historically varied from a production storage to a guardian of cultural heritage and to a source of profit. The changes in the discourse reflect the regulations, technological developments, shifts in the organisation and society on a wider scale. The results give a unique perspective into understanding how archiving television has changed over time and how these historical circumstances may have conditioned the shaping of cultural memory later and specifically in the present.

COH02 Shifting Grounds of Media History: Technologies, Texts, and Practices

PP 0859 Artificial intelligence at the gates. A semi-systematic literature review of how AI can (or cannot) shift the grounds of media history

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Over the past few years, artificial intelligence (AI) has experienced increasing adoption in education and academic research. In historical research, its introduction has been discussed not only in terms of technical support for research activities but also for the way it intersects with long-standing debates about historical methods, including source selection, interpretation, contextualization, and the epistemic status of historical knowledge (Sternfeld, 2023). Historiography has repeatedly emphasized that historical facts and sources are not neutral but produced through methodological decisions, acts of selection, and interpretive frameworks. Reflections on the digital turn further suggest that an increasing dependence on computational methods may obscure these choices by turning them into technical tasks and data-driven operations (Raines, 2025). At the same time, as historical analysis relies heavily on language, imagery, narrative construction, and interpretive judgment, studies stress that AI-based methods cannot be straightforwardly transferred from other disciplines and must be understood as analytical tools of human-machine collaboration in which interpretive responsibility remains with the historian (Yao, 2025). This tension, however, is often marginal in AI-driven historical research, including media history, despite the growing urgency to define conditions for its meaningful integration.

As a contribution to this ongoing discussion this article explores, through a semi-systematic literature review (Snyder, 2019), how AI has been conceptualized and used in historical research across adjacent fields. Drawing on a structured and transparent search strategy, the review synthesizes a heterogeneous body of literature composed by articles in humanities and social sciences published from 2022 to 2025. This corpus is analyzed through thematic analysis, combining deductive and inductive approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006), focusing on conceptualizations of AI, the types of sources and of AI tools used, the phases of the research interested, and whether methodological and epistemological issues are explicitly discussed.

Preliminary findings indicate recurring patterns. Definitions of AI are often implicit or inconsistent, and the sources analyzed with AI are predominantly textual, with visual and audiovisual materials only marginally addressed despite their methodological significance for media history. Moreover, in historical research, AI mainly been used as workflow infrastructure to enhance analysis or provide research support, with interpretive authority remaining explicitly human. Nevertheless, fundamental historical tasks like source selection, categorization, and pattern detection are often embedded in modeling and preprocessing choices and not always recognized as critical decisions to be taken consciously by historians. Although transparency and ethical issues are sometimes considered, ongoing engagement with source criticism, context, and gaps remains unevenly limited. Generally, there seems to be a lack of in-depth and much-needed reflection on the methodological and epistemological consequences of using AI tools in historical research.

In conclusion, this paper shows that the growing use of AI in historical research has not been accompanied by an equally robust methodological reflection and reveals recurring patterns that remain obscured in single-field studies. Finally, the article articulates an agenda aimed at supporting media historians in the critical use of AI, offering guidance, not best practices, for addressing these gaps and for integrating AI into media-historical research.

COH02 Shifting Grounds of Media History: Technologies, Texts, and Practices

PP 0860 Embodied historiographies of absence: Walking, listening, and play in postcolonial Lisbon

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This paper examines walking, listening, and playful participation as methodological tools for communication history through two Lisbon-based works: *Immemorial*, a performative audio-walk narrating suppressed colonial histories, and *Memorial*, a pervasive game engaging with the delayed construction of an official slavery memorial. Rather than treating these works as cultural artefacts, they are approached as innovative situated historiographic methods that mobilize embodied movement, locative media, and audience participation to interrogate historical continuities in mediated remembrance and public silence.

Lisbon is positioned as a palimpsestic communicative space where urban infrastructures function as conduits of imperial power and contested meaning. From maritime trade networks to contemporary heritage tourism, the city's communicative ground has shifted while reproducing patterns of selective visibility and silence. *Immemorial* and *Memorial* disrupt these inherited paths by reactivating embodied listening and playful participation as historiographic strategies. Both works foreground absence and fragmentation as historically grounded conditions of Portuguese public memory.

Drawing on Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, the paper argues that Portugal's memory of slavery is structured less by commemoration than by dispersal and absence. In a postcolonial urban context, memory emerges through fractured,

unstable sites shaped by colonial amnesia. *Immemorial* temporarily reactivates these latent sites, producing contingent *lieux de mémoire* through performative activation of sound and movement. Walking functions as an archival practice that counters official historical narratives by privileging situated, ephemeral forms of mediation.

In *Immemorial*, historical knowledge emerges through spatial coincidence and sensory alignment rather than chronological mastery, producing ruptures that unsettle dominant imperial imaginaries embedded in the city. In line with Benjamin's critique of historicism, this approach frames walking as a mode of historical reception that interrupts linear narratives of progress and national exceptionalism, privileging experiential encounter over teleological continuity.

Paul Ricoeur's theory of memory, forgetting, and narrative responsibility is useful to analyse *Memorial*. The indefinite postponement of Lisbon's slavery memorial is interpreted as institutional forgetting enacted through bureaucratic discourse and temporal deferral. By translating this condition into a playable structure, *Memorial* exposes how postcolonial memory acknowledges historical violence while indefinitely delaying reparative action. Participation becomes a way of navigating "difficult memory," revealing how responsibility is negotiated and deferred in public communication.

Methodologically, the paper treats walking paths, interruptions, and absences as archival materials for cross-temporal analysis of post-imperial memory politics, and contemporary locative media. By reframing walking, listening, and play as historically embedded modes of mediation, we highlight a new historiographic approach in communication history and contribute to postcolonial debates on power and participation. Embedding contemporary locative media within enduring communicative infrastructures, the paper shows how experimental practices unsettle dominant narratives of progress while revealing persistent patterns of mediated absence and institutional forgetting across time. Ultimately, such practices operate as historiographic tools that challenge historical exceptionalism. Attending to paths, connections, and participatory futures enables a critical understanding of how urbanism and media have historically helped shaping the grounds on which public memory and responsibility are negotiated.

COH02 Shifting Grounds of Media History: Technologies, Texts, and Practices

PP 0861 On the historiography of text-image relations: A long-term view

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The relationship between text and image is a longstanding discussion in the Humanities. At several historical junctures it has been renewed as a result of media developments. The first media revolution of the 19th century brought reproducibility into the equation, and the medium of photography made it possible to put a variety of visual media together on the pages of a book. In the 1960s, challenges to existing cultural divides brought a still wider range of images from high and low culture together. Then from the 1990s came the second media revolution where digitalisation promised to unite all media with limitless freedom, where book pages became Web pages and all media could mingle on them.

In short, a history of placing images and text together exists that is a history of media technologies, as well as a cultural, social and political history. There is also, or at least there should be, a historiography of text/image relations, since intellectuals, historian, media historians and rhetoricians have long discussed the possibilities and pitfalls of communication that combines text and image.

This presentation starts off by discussing two main ways of understanding the long-term developments of text-image combinations. One emphasises change: it sees the tradition of institutionalised disciplines in the Humanities like history and philosophy as placing their prestige and epistemological hopes squarely with text-based media. This is then thought to have changed gradually from the 1960s, and particularly with the interdisciplinary «visual turn» from the turn of the millennium. Disciplinary expressions of this turn include visual communication and visual history, to some extent also media history.

A critique of this line of historiographic thinking is then made, arguing that it represents a variety of presentism, and that the discipline of history contains a number of significant counterexampes. Image-based discussions on book pages in fact existed already in the 19th century, and adventurous experimentations with text-image combinations at least from the early 20th. On this basis, an argument is made that intellectually ambitious image-text combination has been a constant, more than a variable, from the 19th century into the age of electronic media, and also into the digital era, where fundamental text-image relations have been repeated, more than transformed.

Throughout the presentation, illustrative examples are drawn on from historical and media-historical works. Three seminal cases of ambitious and reflexive text-image combination are particularly highlighted: Aby Warburg's photography-based, early 20th century *Mnemosyne Atlas*, John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* television and book project from the early 1970s, Roland Barthes' reflections on photography from the same period, and a major digital humanities Web resource from the early 2000s, *Feral Atlas*.

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COH02 Shifting Grounds of Media History: Technologies, Texts, and Practices

PP 0862 Critical pieces of the functionalist puzzle: How women researchers can shift our field's historical grounds

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The history of communication studies has frequently relied on overly simplistic narratives to explain the field's development. As a result, we have often reinforced disciplinary centers and peripheries, as well as a limited set of canonical figures both in our teaching and scholarly research (Pooley & Park, 2013). In turn, our traditional historiography has transformed what was once a diverse, heterogeneous, and plural field into a narrow, singular, and monolithic disciplinary imaginary (Park & Pooley, 2008). We argue that this highly fragmented history has hindered longstanding calls for a more dialogical and reflexive field of communication research (e.g., Waisbord, 2019 & 2025).

Within these dominant historical narratives, Lazarsfeld's Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) at Columbia University has been positioned as a pivotal turning point in the field's history and as the primary citational authority to represent its embraced functionalist American origins (Pooley & Park, 2013). At the same time, other contemporaneous schools —most notably the critical Frankfurt School— were framed by early historians as Columbia's ideal counterpoint, thereby establishing a foundational dialectic that supplied the epistemic tension necessary for consolidating the identity of a young field. This oppositional framing persisted, despite existing evidence of intellectual exchange across paradigms (Robinson, 2010). Subsequent scholarship has reinforced this dichotomy, turning it into a rhetorical device that obscures the field's longstanding diversity and multi-paradigmatic character.

We argue that recovering marginalized figures in the field's history—particularly women scholars—can help us uncover dismissed aspects of its intellectual development, including early interactions between different paradigms, scholars, and institutions.

The main objective of this study is to identify early points of interaction between functionalist and critical approaches in communication research by examining the work of women scholars. To this end, we employ a critical-hermeneutic archival research methodology across 7 archives in Europe and North America. Our analysis draws on 354 documents (2304 pages), including grey literature, correspondence, and personal materials associated with scholars associated to both the BASR and the Frankfurt School.

Our findings identify a group of 5 women scholars at Columbia's BASR whose work was informed by early critical perspectives on communication and the media during the 1940s and 1950s. These scholars include Katherine Wolf (1904–1954), Marie Jahoda (1907–2001), Herta Herzog (1910–2010), Marjorie Fiske (1914–1992), and Hazel Gaudet (1908–1975). Adopting a socio-epistemic approach, we focus on: (1) recovering these women's figures for the broader history of the field; (2) critically examining the eclectic and critical work they produced within the BASR; and (3) analyzing how they articulated early interpersonal and intellectual networks linking functionalist and critical scholars.

In conclusion, we propose a more nuanced reading of early interactions between functionalist and critical thought, arguing that women scholars played a significant role in shaping the field's history. We also draw attention to the still largely unexplored early transatlantic intellectual interconnections in communication research across the Columbia and Frankfurt Schools. Ultimately, historical evidence of early paradigmatic diversity underscores the need for more complex and plural approaches to communicative phenomena moving forward.

COH02 Shifting Grounds of Media History: Technologies, Texts, and Practices

PP 0863 There is no "real time": The long history of the dream of instantaneous communication

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In my presentation I will discuss the notion of 'real time' in interpersonal communication. In other words, I will talk about the idea of a near-instantaneous exchange of information between people, made possible by technology. I will make both a historical and a theoretical point.

Beginning with the historical perspective, I will show that the aspiration for immediate communication through technology began with the first epistolary systems in ancient empires (Radner, 2014), and a recurring metaphor emerged: letters (or messengers) were depicted as winged creatures or carried by such beings, including birds, winged humans, angels and dragons. The concept of such winged letters was far more prevalent than the actual use of pigeon post. In the Renaissance, with the creation of postal systems open to the public, the postal system (our 'snail mail' today) became the incarnation of speed. Several phrases emerged at this time in European languages, such as the French 'en poste' and the English

'posthaste' (Behringer, 2006). This was paralleled by the rise of clock time, which allowed a precise measurement of delay, a yardstick for the appreciation of increased speed of transmission. The telegraph, a major technological and discursive turning point, was said to herald the 'annihilation of space' and/or the 'death of distance'. These themes have been repeated ever since with regard to various technologies, such as the telephone, wireless telegraphy and radio, and most recently the internet (Cairncross, 2001).

From a theoretical point of view, I will argue that the phrase 'real time' is less about technological capacity than about an unfulfillable promise. Technology repeatedly fails (from ancient letters to the internet), and waiting is a constant feature (see, for example, Alexander, 2017). Furthermore, the desire for immediacy can be linked to an ideal of communication as fusion (Peters, 1999), which is hindered by the reality of separate bodies.

In this regard, the history of technology cannot be considered in isolation from the history of religion and spiritual traditions, which have attempted to overcome this reality. These efforts paralleled those of technology. For example, research on telepathy (then a new term) flourished at the end of the 19th century.

Thus, what makes our present time unique is less the fullfilment of the dream than the extreme tension between this dream and our inability to achieve instantaneity despite our much-hyped "advanced" technology.

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COH03 Infrastructures, Networks, and Archives

PP 0965 Sensible archives? Capturing experience and affect in born-digital archives

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The digital culture of the late 20th century until the early 2000's, including practices such as blogging and gaming, is now fully recognized as part of our cultural history. It has contributed to shaping our modern digital world, where digital interfaces and artificial intelligence have become day-to-day tools. Most of today's adult European citizens have grown up with video games and the early Web, building their digital skills as new communication channels started to emerge. To help communication historians analyse and understand these evolutions, cultural institutions such as national libraries have built born-digital archives in order to preserve web pages, video games and online videos.

When setting ourselves to studying these archives with an historical perspective, we discover an often underacknowledged issue: we are lacking a major element that is hardly captured in the sources, namely experience. Digital material is highly dynamic and interactive and its use often implies communication activities and online relationships in addition to documentary content. Born-digital archives embed conversational aspects – through comments, backchannels, reciprocal links, virtual environments, etc. – and emotional aspects related to their social nature. Documenting the experience of these conversations and associated emotions – how the experience was felt and what it meant at the time – is key if we want to understand how they fit in the broader landscape of social and cultural changes across the past 40 years.

Beyond traditional ways of documenting experience (through secondary sources such as oral archives, newspapers and magazines, social networks…), we are experimenting with new ways to collect evidence of the emotional and conversational nature and impact of blogging and gaming practices and how to adequately incorporate them in digital archives.

In our research on digital gaming archives, we focus on participatory and ephemeral practices within games and among gamers, foregrounding social interaction, emotional engagement, and networks of communities and practices around (retro) gaming. In particular, we examine how retro gaming communities actively reflect on emotional genuity and the original feel of play as a way of securing what they perceive as authentic gaming experiences. Through citizen science and co-creation formats, we document how these communities articulate emotional impact, cultural significance, and gaming memories, and how such experiential markers can become relevant for archival descriptions.

Within the SkyTaste project, we use art-based research to develop a sensible approach to web archives, building on methods such as situated research, metaphoric mapping, and empathetic exploration. "Sensible" can be understood as a twofold approach: one that acknowledges the sensitive nature of emotional and intimate archived material, and one that uses the senses (sight, hearing, touch) as a way to create a direct connection with the archive, not mediated by reflection or analysis. Sensible approaches raise new historical questions or help hypothesis emerge for future research. They lead us to having

a different perspective on the archive, acknowledging different viewpoints or pointing us to yet unseen details. Finally, they can open pathways for new archiving initiatives and for the dissemination of research results towards a wider audience.

COH03 Infrastructures, Networks, and Archives

PP 0966 Networking and supercomputing centres: The case of CINECA in redefining human-technical networks in a pre-Internet era

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The aim of my presentation is to historicize supercomputing centres as sites of experimentation for networking environments, focusing on the 1980s. I will use the term "network" both in the technical (connectivity) aspect than the human (relational) one. The purpose is to underscore how, within the specificities of supercomputing centres, technological developments in data networks and communications shaped and were shaped by human networks (the communities crossing those centres).

Supercomputing lies at the heart of simulation sciences (Edwards, 2013), but supercomputing centres are nowadays also important sites for the ecosystem of generative AI as well (see the *Cartography of generative AI* project: https://cartography-of-generative-ai.net/). Furthermore, supercomputing centres' importance in fostering what's the Internet today has been underlined by Abbate (1999) and Weber (2019). Data networks are central within supercomputer centres, because supercomputers produce a large amount of data, but it is produced within a central point that needs to be connected to other research institutions. In solving one issue – computational power – scientists and computer scientists had also to tackle the other: how to transmit the data generated by that computational power. Supercomputing centres, moreover, had to find solutions between machines that relied on different hardware and software architectures (Edwards 2013; Gugerli and Wichum 202).

The connectivity problems, however, can also shed light on which relational networks were part of supercomputing centres: where and what to connect. Based on my ongoing PhD research on the history of CINECA, one of the main supercomputing centres in Italy, I will retrace CINECA's attempt in creating a connection system within the centre and the institutions surrounding it, before the Internet era. CINECA's effort in building its network then can be defined in two ways:

- The technical network: the need to wire and connect all the machines within the centre, when everyone of those machines had different operating systems
- The human network: the need to dialogue with all the different scientific communities that used CINECA's machines.

Historicizing supercomputing centres, then, means understanding how supercomputing gathered specific networks of interests tied to objects and infrastructures, as conceptualized by Gießmann (2024). It will also serve as a specific case study for the struggles of a pre-Internet era, starting from specific institutional needs (such as CINECA's). Within communication histories, supercomputers can be an interesting site of analysis and, possibly, a specific media: one that make possible scientific and big data processing.

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COH03 Infrastructures, Networks, and Archives

PP 0967 The siren-radio media ensemble and the emerging protocols of Swedish preparedness communication 1930–1960

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This paper examines the emergence of sound-based preparedness communication in Sweden between the 1930s and the early Cold War, placing emphasis on the siren and public service radio as interlinked media technologies. Rather than approaching media preparedness as a set of messages or prominent campaigns, the paper explores the sonic alarm system as a historically contextualized infrastructure composed of technological challenges and negotiated social protocols. As Lisa Gitelman (2006) argues, a cultural-historical perspective on media history warrants emphasis on the transforming social, cultural, and material conditions that have shaped communication over time. From this perspective, it follows that researchers should be sensitive to the dynamics of media as a combination of technology and social protocol, the latter signifying the values, norms, uses and practices surrounding media technologies. In addition, the paper makes use of the concepts of logistical media (Peters 2015; Hockenberry, Starosielski & Zieger 2021) and communication maintenance (Edgerton 2007; Balbi & Leggero 2025), both addressing the way media organize and arrange things and people. Thereby,

attention is directed in equal terms to the upkeep of this particular communication infrastructure, and the cultural habits and mentalities associated with it.

Empirically, the paper combines two strands of historical analysis. The first examines the siren as a new sonic medium of urban civil protection in the age of air warfare, tracing how its meaning was negotiated through testing routines, instructional campaigns, and debates in the press. The second strand analyzes the role of the Swedish public service broadcaster, Sveriges Radio, in translating the alarm into authoritative information. Drawing on archival material from the public service broadcaster and the Swedish psychological defence, we show how radio was positioned as a trusted medium to which citizens were instructed to turn to once the siren sounded. Focusing on the period 1930 to 1960, the paper situates this siren-radio media ensemble (Ytreberg 2014) within broader transformations of Swedish preparedness culture and total defence thinking, highlighting the emergence and consolidation of an organized, systematic approach to media preparedness in an age of total war.

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COH03 Infrastructures, Networks, and Archives

PP 0968 From ruins to networks: NATO, telecommunications, and military integration in the early 1950s

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This paper offers a historically grounded examination of NATO's role in shaping communications infrastructures, with particular emphasis on the Alliance's formative period in the early 1950s. While NATO has been widely studied as a military and political institution, its influence on national and transnational telecommunications has remained largely overlooked. Drawing on archival research, the paper argues that communications were not merely a technical support function but a foundational element of NATO's operational capacity and a significant driver of postwar infrastructural reconstruction in Western Europe.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Europe's communications networks were severely damaged, underinvested, and fragmented. Telephone penetration was low, long-distance calls unreliable, and waiting lists extensive across major NATO member states such as the United Kingdom, France, and West Germany. Against this backdrop, NATO's creation in 1949 coincided with a broader US-led strategy to consolidate Western Europe politically, economically, and militarily. Alongside the Marshall Plan and other initiatives of Cold War containment, NATO emerged as a mechanism to integrate Western European defense under US leadership. Effective telecommunications were indispensable to this project, as alliance strategy depended on the rapid coordination of forces, intelligence sharing, and command-and-control across national borders.

During the early 1950s, NATO identified two urgent communications priorities: the construction of a reliable "signals communications infrastructure" and the coordination of that infrastructure across heterogeneous national systems. Beginning in 1950, the Alliance launched a rapidly expanding program of communications projects, increasing from several dozen annually to hundreds by the mid-1950s. These initiatives included landlines, radio relay circuits, and early radio networks distributed across allied territories from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean. Importantly, NATO did not build a fully separate system; instead, it planned communications that would interoperate with national military networks and, crucially, with civilian telecommunications infrastructures.

This dual-use approach meant that NATO communications projects simultaneously served military objectives and peacetime European communications. By the mid-1950s, NATO projects were expected to add tens of thousands of kilometers of new lines and circuits to existing civilian networks, representing a substantial contribution to Europe's postwar recovery.

Nevertheless, the early NATO communications buildout was neither smooth nor unified. Disagreements among member states (over issues such as cost-sharing, West German rearmament, and regional conflicts) shaped the pace and form of development. National planning priorities, technological incompatibilities, and institutional rivalries often complicated efforts to achieve interoperability. Despite NATO's growing influence over member states' defense policies, comprehensive integration of communications systems remained elusive.

Overall, this paper demonstrates that NATO's early communications efforts were central to both alliance military readiness and the reconstruction of European telecommunications. In the early 1950s, NATO functioned not only as a security alliance but also as a powerful infrastructural actor, embedding Cold War strategic imperatives into the technical foundations

of Europe's emerging communications systems – foundations whose influence continues to shape military and civilian networks today.

COH03 Infrastructures, Networks, and Archives

PP 0969 The other history of submarine telegraphy. The shift toward maintenance and repair through the history of Telcon (1864–1914)

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From the second half of the 19th century, national and international telegraph networks were connected to form the first global telecommunications network, largely thanks to submarine and suboceanic cables. A significant body of literature (see Winseck and Pike, 2007; Wenzlhuemer, 2013; Müller, 2016) has examined the construction and management of this infrastructure, particularly in terms of its use as a political tool by European nations, especially the British Empire, in projecting their influence towards colonial domains. It has also been studied as an economic enterprise, primarily funded by private capital and companies. Drawing on primary archival sources, this paper aims to enrich current historical research by highlighting the essential actions and strategies that kept the network operational in the medium and long-term, emphasizing their integral role in the economic policy of submarine telegraphy.

As with terrestrial telegraphy, maintaining and repairing the submarine infrastructure represented a significant cost for telegraph companies. Moreover, these companies had to deal with complex operations, which were often carried out in the open ocean, in many cases with little success. The network was fragile and, in the event of a breakdown, it could take weeks for the cable to be repaired, when repair was possible. These aspects are considered secondary in telegraphy historiography, yet the story of the Telegraph Construction and Maintenance Company (Telcon), addressed by this paper, demonstrates their primary importance and how they could be decisive. In 2026, the 160th anniversary of the first transatlantic cable laid precisely by the Telcon will mark the beginning of a new era of communication. However, that cable was fragile and failed six years after being installed, never to be repaired. Regardless of the outcomes of submarine telegraphy discussed in the literature, it is necessary to focus on the activities that made them durable, so effective.

"The timelines of technological history are based on dates of invention and innovation" (Edgerton, 2006). However, the growing interest in maintenance and repair across different disciplines over the last two decades could provide the impetus for a necessary counter-narrative. This article provides this kind of historiographical analysis, focusing on the most significant company in the sector of construction and repair for submarine telegraphy. Thanks to research carried on in three different archives and numerous primary sources, it recounts the main stages of Telcon's history from 1864 to 1914, drawing an alternative timeline of submarine telegraphy focused on maintenance and repair. It demonstrates how Telcon ensured the reliability of its network managing changes and continuities by taking technical and organizational measures to address the material constraints of the infrastructure, thereby operating a kind of essential yet generally overlooked "material politics" (Law and Mol, 2009).

COH04 Actors, Pacifists and Creators: Histories of Maintenance, Norms and Memories

PP 1065 Hidden paths to the public sphere: Women's routes into journalism in pre-1914 Poland as a resource for contemporary media studies

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Hidden paths to the public sphere: women's routes into journalism in pre-1914 Poland as a resource for contemporary media studies

The turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries marked a period of profound transformation in European media systems, characterised by expanding publics, the gradual professionalisation of journalism, and shifting boundaries of participation in the public sphere. These processes, however, did not unfold uniformly across Europe. In the Polish case, the absence of statehood and the experience of political partition created a distinct political and communicative environment that fundamentally shaped women's access to journalism and the public sphere.

This paper argues that the trajectories of Polish women journalists before 1914 exemplify "shifting grounds" in European communication history and constitute an important, yet largely overlooked, resource for contemporary media and journalism studies. Under conditions of political oppression, censorship, and intensified cultural and educational activism, women's entry into journalism in the Polish territories followed paths that differed significantly from those observed in sovereign states. Rather than emerging through institutionalised professional channels, women's journalistic practices were frequently embedded in broader social, educational, and national projects.

Focusing on pre-1914 Poland as a European case study, the paper examines how women entered the media sphere through informal and non-linear routes. Literary activity, translation, pedagogical work, and social engagement often served as gateways to journalistic authorship and public visibility. These pathways shaped distinctive strategies of legitimacy, authorship,

and participation in the press, challenging dominant narratives of journalistic professionalisation grounded in male-centred and institution-driven models.

Methodologically, the study adopts a herstorical approach within communication history, drawing on qualitative analysis of press materials and selected case studies of Polish women journalists, including Bronisława Neufeldówna, Natalia Jastrzębska, and Eugenia Żmijewska. By reconstructing their professional trajectories, thematic choices, and communicative strategies, the paper reveals "hidden paths" to the public sphere that have largely faded from canonical historiographies of journalism. These cases illuminate how women negotiated structural constraints while simultaneously contributing to the development of public discourse.

Beyond its historical contribution, the paper emphasises the contemporary relevance of herstory in communication and journalism studies. Revisiting forgotten women journalists exposes enduring mechanisms of exclusion in the production of media history and challenges established narratives of journalistic professionalisation. At the same time, the study highlights herstory as an increasingly relevant thematic and narrative resource within contemporary journalism and media culture, where historical perspectives—particularly those centred on women's experiences—are gaining renewed visibility and resonance. By integrating herstorical approaches into communication history, the paper contributes to more inclusive frameworks for understanding media pasts and strengthens the dialogue between historical research and present-day journalistic practice.

COH04 Actors, Pacifists and Creators: Histories of Maintenance, Norms and Memories

PP 1066 Mass media and communicative norms: A bottom-up perspective of long-term trends (1840–1990)

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Before the rise of 'social media', mass media were often criticised as creating a socially fragmented public of passive consumers. But how did people themselves react to these new technologies? How did their understandings of the uses and significance of different types of communication change against the background of the new affordances and challenges presented by mass media? Based on an analysis of more than 200 British and German diaries written by ordinary people between 1840 and 1990, we investigate how evolving mass media influenced people's perceptions of the value and relevance of communication in their everyday lives. Within our three-year research project "Between Voice and Silence: Communicative Norms in Diaries 1840–1990", we developed a coding system to systematically analyse diarists' metacommunicative comments on both their everyday communicative encounters as well as on their own practice of diary writing. To operationalise our large time span, we selected diaries written during the 1840s, 1880s, 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s. By capturing how diarists at these respective points in time framed, phrased and used communicative opportunities and constraints, we analyse the ideas and norms of communication that underpin their metacommunicative comments. Investigating how these ideas and norms of communication changed over time, we show how such changes were underpinned by broader developments within our time span such as democratisation, individualisation, and mediatisation. For the purposes of this talk, we focus on how the increasing presence and proliferation of mass media between 1840 and 1990 informed diarists' perceptions of the opportunities and constraints of various modes of communication. We also consider possible influences on their own practice of diary writing and diarists' comments on mass media communication. In doing so, we engage with scholarship on the social history of media (e.g., Boddy 2004; Briggs/Burke 2009; Gitelmann 2006; Führer/Ross 2006, Moran 2014) as well as on changing ideas and norms of communication (e.g., Peters 1999, Verheyen 2010, Schröter 2011).

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COH04 Actors, Pacifists and Creators: Histories of Maintenance, Norms and Memories

PP 1067 The polyphony of PostOst family memory on TikTok and Instagram

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In recent years, users with (post-)Soviet and Eastern European family histories have increasingly shared personal stories on social media platforms. These platforms have become prominent spaces in which experiences of migration, belonging, and cultural identity are negotiated through personal narratives embedded in platform-specific genres. These practices lower barriers to participation and provide accessible entry points into complex historical issues.

In the proposed presentation, we aim to explore and structure different types of PostOst mnemonic content. PostOst refers to people with (post-)Soviet or Eastern European family histories living in Germany or other Western European countries (Boychenko, 2022; Schulz, 2022). Using the concept of the "polyphony of memory" (Schwarzenegger and Lohmeier, 2020), we argue that digital media open up spaces in which marginalized groups can participate in memory negotiations and contribute to a more critical and potentially more democratic engagement with the past. At the same time, such openness raises questions of responsibility and legitimacy, and the abundance of unfiltered voices can foster fragmentation, polarization, and the distortion of historical facts.

Our research addresses two guiding questions: First, how is family memory articulated and made visible by members of the PostOst community on social media?, Second, how do PostOst content creators draw on genres and formats characteristic of TikTok and Instagram in presenting these memories. Family memory is central in this context because it constitutes the most accessible and universally available form of remembrance. Unlike institutionalized or expert-driven memory practices, it is something that everyone possesses as an entry and connecting point between collective and personal memory.

Drawing on a qualitative and inductive design, the study analyzes mnemonic content on TikTok and Instagram from a German-speaking PostOst community. Posts were selected using theoretical sampling based on relevant hashtags and keywords (e.g., #postost, #russlanddeutsche, #balkanchildhood). Applying Kuckartz's typology approach (2016), different types of mnemonic content were systematically identified and described.

Preliminary results indicate a wide range of content, extending from the traditional presentation and exploration of an original family photo to Get-ready-with-me videos that integrate elements of family history into everyday practices. Mnemonic practices appear to be shaped both by platform logics and platform-specific trends.

An illustrative example is the "We Are Clean" trend, revolving around a narrative of success. Migrants share old family photographs from their countries of origin, followed by images of the now adult child achieving success in Germany, such as obtaining a university degree. The audio phrase "We are clean" in the background of the videos symbolizes that the parents' struggles have paid off. Numerous similar videos circulate with this sound bite. While some creators primarily aim to entertain or provide only superficial information, others engage deeply with historical contexts. A further preliminary observation suggests that certain posts can also legitimize alternative narratives that risk oversimplifying social realities or fostering division.

By typologizing PostOst mnemonic content on social media, this presentation contributes to research on the polyphony of memory and advances understanding of how platformized memory practices reshape migration-related remembrance beyond institutional frameworks, providing a foundation for future research.

COH04 Actors, Pacifists and Creators: Histories of Maintenance, Norms and Memories

PP 1068 Media practices of contradicting in light of continuity and change: Feminist-pacifist interventions in World War I and the Cold War

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Media practices of contradicting in light of continuity and change: Feminist-pacifist interventions in World War I and the Cold War

This submission addresses the question to which extent historical conditions form media practices of contradicting (concept by Thomas et al., 2024; Lünenborg et al., 2025). In order to capture in a context-sensitive way both change and continuity in articulating dissent, the project examines the women's peace movement in Germany and its interventions under two different historical conditions—World War I and the Cold War.

The development of media practices of contradicting get analyzed taking the International Women's League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) as an example. The League was formed in 1915, in the midst of World War I, by middle-class suffragists who met at the International Women's Peace Congress in The Hague. There, not only an immediate and unconditional ceasefire was advocated, but also a groundbreaking concept for modern international law developed (Baetens, 2010; Bianchi, 2014). These early pacifist interventions are compared to those in the Cold War, when WILPF members, together

with women of various political parties, protested against the rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany in the early 1950s (Meyer, 1989; Leyrer, 2025; Song, 2025).

Although these two feminist-pacifist interventions took place in different political systems (monarchy vs. democracy) and in the midst of different states of war (hot vs. cold war), some commonalities can be identified:

First, Media practices of contradicting were directed against dominant positions in public discourse, additionally, they took place under conditions of social and discursive inequality (by articulating themselves publicly and addressing the 'male' domain of war and peace, the female pacifists left the narrow sphere open to them as women at that time). Furthermore, feminist-pacifist interventions in both periods resulted in similar silencing processes. It was publicly discredited as 'unpatriotic' (World War I) or 'communist' (Cold War), and large parts of the German public distanced themselves from these feminist-pacifist interventions, which were ultimately banned from the public sphere altogether with the help of censorship and activity bans (Kramer, 2010; Meyer, 1989; Wilmers, 2008). It is significant here that silencing was enforced not only with the help of the martial law in an authoritarian monarchy, but also in the democratic state of the Federal Republic of Germany, when the (rather bourgeoise) Munich WILPF group was declared an anti-constitutional organization by the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, banned completely from 1955 to 1957 and then placed under police surveillance until 1967 (Dieckmann, 1995).

Selected pacifist interventions with subsequent processes of silencing from both periods will be compared to identify lines of continuity on the one hand and time-specific features of media practices of contradicting on the other. The analysis is based on newsletters of the feminist-pacifist movement, press clippings, files of the military administration during World War I and the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior in the 1950s, papers of the WILPF, and ego documents from key protagonists of the women's peace movement, which were subjected to hermeneutic analysis.

COH04 Actors, Pacifists and Creators: Histories of Maintenance, Norms and Memories

PP 1069 Nothing new under the sun: Arguments and denial techniques in anti-vaccination rhetoric since Edward Jenner (1749–1823)

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This article examines the historical persistence of vaccine denial by analysing the arguments, rhetorical strategies, and communication infrastructures mobilised against vaccination since Edward Jenner's introduction of the smallpox vaccine. Situated within a broader research project aimed at mapping transnational networks of scientific dissemination and counter-knowledge, the study foregrounds the role of media systems in shaping scientific authority, public trust, and resistance to public health interventions.

As contextual background, this article analyses a ten-year corpus of pro-vaccination newspaper publications that actively promoted the circulation of vaccine-related scientific knowledge across Europe and the Atlantic world. This includes the *Jornal de Coimbra* between 1812 and 1820, which systematically republished scientific reports and correspondence produced by Jenner's collaborators in London and disseminated them throughout the Kingdom of Portugal and its Atlantic territories, including Bahia, Brazil, during the period of the French invasions. This corpus illustrates the existence of early transnational communication infrastructures designed to stabilise scientific authority, legitimise vaccination as a public health practice, and embed medical innovation within institutional and political frameworks. This network is further exemplified by a clipping from the *Gazeta de Madrid* preserved in Edward Jenner's personal papers, highlighting the deliberate circulation of vaccine-related knowledge across linguistic and national borders.

The core of this article, however, consists of an in-depth qualitative content analysis of *The Vaccination Inquirer and Health Review* during the period from 1879 to 1902. Published as the official journal of the London Society for the Abolition of Compulsory Vaccination and later of the National Anti-Vaccination League, *The Vaccination Inquirer* functioned as a central organisational and discursive hub of the anti-vaccination movement. Its relatively stable editorial organisation combined leading editorials, thematic articles, extensive readers' correspondence, reports on meetings and parliamentary actions, international news summaries, and supplementary materials such as statistical tables, legal case reports, and press extracts. This structure enabled the systematic production, circulation, and legitimisation of counter-knowledge across Britain and North America.

A substantial proportion of each issue was dedicated to letters from readers and activists, including parents, clergy, local organisers, and occasionally medical practitioners, who shared personal experiences, moral objections, and practical advice related to resistance against compulsory vaccination. These letters were analysed both as rhetorical artefacts that privileged anecdotal testimony and emotional appeal, and as network mechanisms that connected dispersed actors and transformed individual grievances into a shared oppositional narrative.

Methodologically, the study combines an inductive qualitative content analysis with a deductive analytical procedure based on the FLICC matrix developed by Cook et al. (2020). Editorials, articles, correspondence, and reports were systematically coded to identify recurring themes, argumentative structures, and narrative patterns, and subsequently analysed according

to the five core techniques of science denial identified in the FLICC framework: Fake experts, Logical fallacies, Impossible expectations, Cherry-picking, and Conspiracy theories.

By reconstructing the organisational logic and denialist repertoire of early anti-vaccination journalism, the article contributes to current debates on media, power, and public trust, highlighting the enduring role of communication systems in shaping the social negotiation of scientific knowledge and public health legitimacy.

COH05 Journalistic Practices Through Time: Challenges and Change

PP 1166 Back again? Journalistic role perception of editors in Austrian party media

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Party media have a long history in Austria. Following the diversification of the media landscape and economic pressures, they lost relevance and fell into financial distress in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1990s, only a few party newspapers remained, having evolved into niche products. However, the rise of digital communication platforms and the low-cost distribution of content enabled a resurgence in the 2010s, increasing both the number of party channels and their reach and relevance within the media system.

Our research aims to examine this phenomenon of rapidly spreading portals from a comparative perspective over time. Based on the current state of research on party newspapers and audiovisual media, both from the past and the present, we know very little about the characteristics of party media journalists, their socio-demographics, motivations, and attitudes. Therefore, our research questions are the following:

- How do journalists of party media understand their journalistic role?
- How has this role changed since the heyday?
- Which target groups were addressed then and now?
- What function do these types of media have in society?

Our investigation focuses on the social democratic *Arbeiter-Zeitung AZ* (Workers' Newspaper). Founded in 1889, it developed into a widely circulated and influential publication. However, due to economic reasons, it had to cease publication exactly 100 years after its founding. We also examine *KONTRAST.at*, launched by the parliamentary club of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) in 2016, as well as the party's YouTube channel *SPÖ-TV*, launched in 2025.

In our research, we will first conduct narrative interviews with former AZ journalists until theoretical saturation is reached. Based on the results of the grounded theory analysis, we will then conduct guideline-based interviews with current employees of the digital party media. Our aim is to identify the structures within the editorial office and the extent to which party ideology conflicts with journalistic quality standards (Melischek & Seethaler, 2019, p. 18). Despite 'efforts to produce decent journalism' (Interview 1), 'party discipline' prevailed within the editorial office. We will pay particular attention to the different departments, the journalists' backgrounds, and the 'generations' of journalists. The material will be analysed using MAXQDA. In addition to theories on understanding the role of journalism, the results are reflected upon in relation to the two different methodological research approaches.

Through this project, we aim to contribute to journalism research, address gaps in the existing literature on party media and provide a foundation for further comparative analyses with conservative and right-wing populist party media.

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COH05 Journalistic Practices Through Time: Challenges and Change

PP 1167 Journalistic experience and political practice: Wilhelm Liebknecht and the entanglement of journalism and politics in nineteenth-century Germany

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In the nineteenth century, journalism and politics were closely intertwined in many Western European countries. In Germany, however, such overlaps rarely extended to the highest levels of either the press or politics. Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) constitutes a notable exception. As a founding figure, long-term leader, and parliamentarian of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), and simultaneously an active journalist and editor for leading liberal newspapers and socialist

party organs, Liebknecht occupied a hybrid position that challenges modern distinctions between journalism and politics. Unlike many contemporary politicians, he not only witnessed the transformation of the media landscape in the nineteenth century but also developed a keen awareness of the growing relevance of a mass-circulated press.

While previous scholarship has primarily examined Liebknecht's journalistic activity within the political history of the labour movement (e.g., Schröder, 2013), this paper situates his work within the field of historical research on mediatisation. The paper contributes to research on politicians' media biographies and the mutual influence of political and media logics (Birkner & Krämer, 2016) as well as to studies on the emergence of "publicity politicians" (Van Waarden, 2025, p. 2) in the context of the rise of the mass press. Against this backdrop, the paper asks how Liebknecht's experiences as a journalist shaped his political ideas and practices and how, conversely, political struggle informed his understanding of journalism. Based on a systematic analysis of a variety of published and unpublished sources — including memoirs, programme articles, party conference minutes, party manifestos, correspondence, and archival documents — the paper advances four interconnected arguments.

First, Liebknecht's commitment to freedom of the press was rooted in his early political and journalistic activities during the revolutions of 1848/49 and was reinforced by sustained experiences of state repression, making press freedom a central demand of Social Democratic media policy under his leadership. Second, he strategically cultivated public visibility, treating parliamentary sessions and court proceedings as mediated stages for political communication. Third, Liebknecht conceptualised the party press as a core political instrument, serving as founder and editor-in-chief of his party's central organs and repeatedly framing the party press as a "weapon" in struggles against political opponents. Finally, influenced by his background as a teacher, he understood journalism as a means of political education.

Overall, the paper demonstrates how nineteenth-century configurations of journalism and politics prefigured later forms of mediated political communication. By historicising strategic media use within a period of close entanglement between journalism and politics and expanding mass communication, the study illuminates long-standing tensions between journalism and political power that remain relevant today.

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COH05 Journalistic Practices Through Time: Challenges and Change

PP 1168 Conflict resolution in the media: United Nations decision number 181 on the Palestinian territories as reported in the portuguese press

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On the 29th of November 1947, the United Nations approved resolution number 181. Known as the decision to partition the Palestinian territory into two states, Arabic and Jew, with a special regime for Jerusalem, the resolution was to be implemented with the end of the British mandate over the territory (1948). Although the aim was to bring stability to the region, and a solution for the European Jews seeking safety, the outcome of the plan ended up representing the beginning of the Arab Israeli war. Under these circumstances the territory became a point of conflict that still prevails until this day, making it one of the longest conflicts of the last century, representing a consequence of the Second World War.

At that time, Portugal was living under the Estado Novo regime, led by Salazar. Known for its autocratic leaders, censorship, propaganda and repression, the regime tried to build "an alternative reality" on an overall "patriotic press" (Ribeiro 2017), determining what was newsworthy (Ribeiro 2015) and creating a journalistic ecosystem assembled as an echo-chamber of the regime's values. Simultaneously, the regime was acknowledged by its position during the Second World War, shifting form "geometric neutrality" to "collaborative neutrality" (Rosas 1998) in compliance with its political affiliations and alliances. Largely due to it's neutrality, Portugal had the right to be a member of the UN from the outset, in 1946. However, it was the countries relations with Germany during the conflict that were used as reasoning for constant vetoes for admission, specially from the soviets. It was only in 1955 that the country was to become a member of the UN, much to the joy of Salazar, until that moment quite cautions of Portuguese international collaborations, expecting recognition for its colonial cause. A subject that ended up, actually, becoming a topic of clear tension and distancing from the international counterparts.

Against this background, this research departs from the question: how did the Portuguese printed media covered the situation of Palestine in 1947 under the influence of censorship and during the negotiations for admission to the United Nations? The investigation aims to understand how the Portuguese printed press of that time covered not only the publication of the resolution but also the ongoing conflict throughout the year having in mind the Portuguese international situation. Drawing on comparative content analysis, this research takes all the news regarding the topic in 1947 as corpus of analysis, along

with the censorship archives of the publications. For that, the research is focused on the two main newspapers of that time, *O Século* and *Diário de Notícias*, and the two most important local newspapers, *Diário de Lisboa* and *Primeiro de Janeiro*.

With the Palestinian conflict with no end in sight, the Portuguese contemporary press is filled with news on the topic, but at a time of an autocratic regime and with the countries international position at stake, how was the topic portrayed is the aim of this research, creating a bridge between past, present and future of conflicts in the media.

COH05 Journalistic Practices Through Time: Challenges and Change

PP 1169 Visible, respectable and cheerful: Thelma Berlack Boozer's "Woman of the Week" column in the 1941 New York Amsterdam News

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This paper presents an analysis of Thelma Berlack Boozer's "Woman of the Week" column in the US Black newspaper *New York Amsterdam News*. During the autumn of 1941, Berlack Boozer wrote 32 "Woman of the Week" columns, each one presenting and interviewing an accomplished Black woman active in Harlem and/or the wider New York area. Berlack Boozer was at the time a very well-known Black woman journalist. She was assistant managing editor of the *New York Amsterdam News* as well as editor of the women's page and a prolific columnist.

Based on the theories and concepts of Patricia Hill Collins, this study positions the "Woman of the Week" column as an instance of Black women's intellectual work. The column was a site of expressing, negotiating, reframing and developing Black feminist views and standpoints during the early part of the so-called "long civil rights movement". As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Belinda Robnett and others have pointed out, the early (1920s-1950s) civil rights movement was deeply grounded in the gender mores of the time, and issues of gender equity were largely ignored in the movement even though "women's issues" (to use the terminology of the times) were not. Previous research on Black women and the civil rights movement has focused more on either on the earlier (1890–1920) Progressive era or the 1960s heyday of the civil rights movement, leaving the interstitial 1920s-1950s era understudied. The study thus contributes both to the history of women in the Black press, and to the history of Black women's thought during the "long civil rights movement" of the 1920s-1950s.

In that time, Black women's intellectual activity was still strongly influenced by what Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham has called "the politics of respectability", a tradition broadly based on Evangelical Christianity that promoted individual moral strictness and manners aimed at achieving "Black uplift". However, the period also saw a slow but gradual rise in the number of Black women professionals – in nursing, teaching, business, social work, public administration, the arts (and journalism!), and so on. This and other developments, notably the rise of Black and cross-racial union activism, contributed both to the reshaping of "the politics of respectability", and to the emergence of more radical Black women's thought – the latter embodied by for example Claudia Jones, Vicki Garvin and indeed Thelma Berlack Boozer's co-worker at the *New York Amsterdam News*, Marvel Cooke.

This study shows how Berlack Boozer's "Woman of the Week" column was a vehicle for this transformation of Black feminist thought. The column was mostly anchored in the "politics of respectability" of an earlier era but also expanded the scope of respectability, for example by advocating for Black women's participation in higher education (including at white universities, challenging racist barriers to entry), as well as occasionally flirting with more radical ideas. Above all, Berlack Boozer's column rendered the ongoing intellectual work by Black women *visible* by providing a dedicated space for celebrating professional/intellectual success in one of the major Black newspapers of the day.

COH05 Journalistic Practices Through Time: Challenges and Change

PP 1170 The commercial roots of body shaming in Victorian newspaper skincare columns and advertisement pages

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This interdisciplinary study illustrates how skincare columns and advertisements published in Victorian British newspapers reinforced notions of shame, exclusion, and punishment associated with facial disfigurement and skin disorders. Disfigurement and skin disorders can be defined as changes in appearance caused by congenital or acquired medical conditions. In medieval times, those with disfigurements were treated as an out-group and morally condemned (Skinner, 2017). During 20th-century wartime Britain, disfigurement was framed as a loss of identity and humanity (Biernoff, 2011).

In nineteenth-century Britain, there was a mutually constitutive relationship between dermatology, the study of skin, and the formal evolution of newspapers. Media coverage of wounded skin assumed a central rhetorical position in debates pertaining to class and social acceptability (Garrisi, 2024). Amidst Britain's sanitation movement, flawless skin emerged as a symbolic canvas embodying a visual moral ideal (te Hennepe, 2014). Skincare products were among the most prominently marketed in the industry, and, as Richards (1990, p. 205) put it, the body had become "the prevailing icon of commodity culture".

Disfigurement, through the lens of disability, can be analysed as a verbal construction rather than a bodily defect (Garland-Thomson, 1998). In fact, a rhetorical and visual analysis of a selection of key studies drawn from newspapers searched through keywords via the Gale Cengage digital archives (1880–1900), shows that skin conditions and disfigurements were depicted through thematic polarities sustained by a set of linguistic devices including antithesis, synecdoche, metaphors, and enumeration. Adverts for products targeting skin disorders such as acne, psoriasis, eczema, and other skin conditions, were built around notions of judgement, shame, and punishment through a binary logic embedded in dichotomies such as, inside skin/outside skin, sick/healthy, whole/broken, symmetrical/asymmetrical. As a result, facial conditions were discursively constructed as inherently problematic, both physically and morally, in order to endorse commercial products that would supposedly cure such conditions.

The use of rhetorical devices, value judgements, and graphic visual imagery contributed to constructing disfigurement as an ideologically loaded concept that benefited the booming skincare industry of the time. In doing so, they laid the groundwork for stigmatising media representations of body diversity, patterns so pervasive that they remain evident in the ways modern mass media promotes skin ideals today. This study highlights the significance of communication history in tracing the commercially-driven roots of contemporary phenomena such as body shaming and media stereotypes targeting physical differences.

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CLP01 The Promise and Limits of Digital Services Act Implementation

PP 0015 Systemic risks in very large online marketplace platforms: An investigation under the digital services act

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The Digital Services Act (DSA) extends regulatory oversight beyond social media to online marketplaces, requiring Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) to identify, assess, and mitigate systemic risks arising from the design and use of their services. This presentation draws on experience from an ongoing project funded by and conducted in collaboration with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre on algorithmic transparency to examine such risks across five major marketplaces—Amazon, Facebook Marketplace, Temu, SHEIN, and AliExpress—with a focus on fraudulent practices and harms affecting minors. By combining computational and qualitative analyses of marketplace content with ethnographic monitoring of DSA data access practices currently implemented by the analyzed platforms, the project aims to support DSA enforcement with empirically grounded evidence for risk assessment and oversight.

From a DSA perspective, systemic risks in online marketplaces threaten consumer protection and the integrity of the digital single market. Product safety risks are particularly acute for minors. Unsafe goods, such as toys lacking the legally required CE marking, are linked to documented injury risks in the EU (Eurofins, 2023). Electronic cigarettes represent an emerging concern: despite EU bans on sales to minors, weak age-verification allows access, while product presentation and packaging increase youth appeal (Modesto-Lowe & Alvarado, 2017). Inappropriate advertising, including sexualized imagery used to market products to children, raises concerns under consumer protection law and the DSA's provisions on protecting minors (BBC News, 2023).

These risks are amplified by platform affordances that shape information visibility and consumer trust. In particular, manipulated and coordinated reviews generated through astroturfing practices distort reputation systems and mislead users. Such practices mirror inauthentic behaviors documented on social media and raise questions about platforms' compliance with DSA obligations related to systemic risk mitigation and the prevention of deceptive practices (Fan et al., 2025).

Empirically, the project focuses on Italian marketplaces across the five platforms and targets high-risk product categories—electronic cigarettes, toys, cosmetics, and children's clothing—identified as priorities for regulatory scrutiny. Data collection covers product listings, seller characteristics, customer reviews, and moderation-related signals over a 12-month period. Additionally, the project systematically assesses platform-specific data access conditions relevant to DSA-compliant research.

This presentation documents data access negotiations, technical constraints, and data quality issues across the five marketplaces, which directly affect the feasibility of independent systemic risk assessment, as envisioned by the DSA. Preliminary findings show the existence of substantial variation characterizing researcher accessibility: Aliexpress, Temu, and SHEIN provide API-based research portals with product and seller data access, while Amazon rely on transparency reports and scraping permissions. Facebook Marketplace data is included into the Meta Content Library, providing both the User Interface and API. The ease and speed of access also vary, as does the type of data provided.

By linking empirical risks to enforcement-relevant data access conditions, the project offers new insights for researchers, regulators, and policymakers, advancing understanding of how systemic risks in online marketplaces can be identified and addressed within the DSA framework.

CLP01 The Promise and Limits of Digital Services Act Implementation

PP 0016 Discussing platform governance in the Czech Republic: Discourse networks behind delayed DSA implementation

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Two years after the Digital Services Act (DSA) became fully applicable, its national implementation still varies across EU member states. Differences persist also in how the DSA is publicly framed and contested (Mattioli, 2025). As of 2026, the Czech Republic remains among the few member states that have not aligned national legislation with the DSA, despite repeated calls to act ahead of the October 2025 parliamentary elections. In May 2025, the European Commission also identified the Czech Republic as one of five member states failing to designate a Digital Services Coordinator and adopt national penalty rules (European Commission, 2025). This case study illustrates how local discourse coalitions (Duygan et al. 2018) shape DSA enforcement, highlighting dynamics that are often invisible from the EU perspective, as emphasized by Börzel (2010).

Building on a recent qualitative analysis of discourses and narratives in the DSA debate in the Czech Republic (Klabíková Rábová, Schneiderová, 2026), we follow up with quantitative Discourse Network Analysis (DNA). We systematically code parliamentary debates, traditional media (print, radio, television), and online news coverage from 2023–2025. Using the Discourse Network Analyzer (Leifeld, 2017) and R-based processing, we model actor coalitions based on shared frames,

repeated co-occurrences, and sustained alignment, identifying discourse clusters, polarized coalitions, and brokers operating across arenas (Leifeld, 2020; Černý & Ocelík, 2020). To capture issue spillovers in communication policy debates, we also track keywords related to adjacent regulatory frameworks, including the DMA, AI Act, and ChatControl.

Preliminary findings point to pronounced polarization. While some coalitions frame the DSA as a necessary instrument for digital sovereignty and platform accountability (Falkner et al., 2024), others emphasize risks to privacy, freedom of expression, and national autonomy (Atzori, 2024). Within parts of the network, we observe frames resonating with established Russian disinformation narratives portraying EU digital regulation as censorship and loss of sovereignty (Tyushka, 2022). Discursive brokers play a key role in diffusing these frames, shaping pressures on regulators and complicating public communication of the law.

First, it demonstrates how public debate often obscures the DSA's legal baseline–particularly its direct applicability and the division of competences—undermining regulatory clarity and reframing EU law as politically optional rather than directly applicable and enforceable at the EU level. Second, it examines whether and how EU-level actors engage in public legitimation, both explanatory and deliberative, when EU digital policies are domestically contested. Third, it analyzes the communicative strategies of an "unempowered" national regulatory authority (ČTÚ) operating under institutional ambiguity, focusing on how it frames its role, authority, and expectations toward platforms, media, and the public.

The Czech case suggests that delayed adaptation of EU platform governance is not merely a procedural failure, but a communicative one. Effective implementation of communication law increasingly depends on understanding national discourse dynamics, their entanglement with hybrid information threats, and the role of strategic public communication in fostering regulatory legitimacy, trust, and compliance (Macnamara, 2025; De Wilde & Rauh, 2019).

CLP01 The Promise and Limits of Digital Services Act Implementation

PP 0017 AI-powered Google search,news media and democracy: How far can the DSA protect Epistemic Rights?

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The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into Google Search is radically changing digital information environments and, consequently, how citizens access, consume and impart information. The implementation of 'AI Overviews' in May 2024, which display an authoritative summary of information and response to users' queries, was followed by a substantial decline in traffic metrics by news outlets in the US. Despite Google's claims that click volume remains stable, with an increase in 'high-quality clicks' (Reid, 2025), different studies and reports indicate otherwise (Chapekis and Lieb, 2025; Elebi, 2025). More recently, Google rolled out what it claims to be its most advanced AI search model. AI Mode is powered by Gemini 2.5 and has multimodal and agentic capabilities to address users' questions in a "simple and intuitive way" (Google Search, 2025). These developments not only put an additional strain on the news media, whose economic crisis has been widely documented (e. g. Newman, 2024), but also have the potential to negatively affect citizens' access to a plurality of information on digital information environments.

Democratic decay and disillusionment with democracies, combined with a decline in political and civil liberties, have become global phenomena. A substantial decline in media freedom and freedom of expression is also a global trend (Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), 2024). This is alarming, because citizens "who engage with news tend to be more knowledgeable about public affairs, more resilient to misinformation, more active in politics, and more connected with their communities than peers who do not" (Nielsen, 2024). Alongside education systems, public institutions and authorities, regulatory bodies, among others, the news media is a crucial epistemic authority in democratic societies. It plays a crucial role in safeguarding a factual basis that maintains a "shared reality" among citizens, who should make informed decisions about issues that concern their lives (Rekker and Harteveld, 2024).

Nieminen (2024) elaborates on the concept of epistemic rights to make a claim of epistemic equality by arguing that it is imperative to increase people's knowledge to save democracy. He understands epistemic rights in association with the requirement for people to have equality in decision-making in a democratic society. This requirement implies citizens' equal access to credible and truthful information in order to make informed decisions that bring benefits not only to themselves, but to society as a whole (Nieminen, 2024: 11). The EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) regulates very large online platforms (VLOPs) and search engines (VLSEs). Hence, the DSA's designated services (e.g., Google Search) must comply with the regulation and develop risk assessments concerning systemic risks, aiming to safeguard European values and fundamental rights, spamming from human dignity to freedom of expression and the pluralism of the media or civil discourse and electoral processes.

Aiming to contribute to current discussions on epistemic rights, news media and democracy this article asks: **What are the implications of the integration of AI technologies into Google Search for epistemic rights? How far is the EU's Digital Services Act able to protect epistemic rights in very large online platforms and search engines?**

CLP01 The Promise and Limits of Digital Services Act Implementation

PP 0018 Governing under uncertainty: Simulating risks and interventions in platform governance

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What if Meta cut off access to news in the EU? What if regulators forced it to moderate hate speech more quickly? Regulators and academics thinking about how to regulate social media platforms are confronted with many such hypotheticals. Answering them is highly challenging. While the Digital Services Act (DSA) has significantly expanded formal rights of access to platform data, gaining access to sensitive platform data in practice is likely to remain difficult. Moreover, the DSA does not allow researchers to test changes to platform systems, such as different moderation rules or recommender designs. As a result, platform governance remains constrained by uncertainty about how alternative platform configurations might function.

Agent-based modelling (ABM) has emerged as a response to such uncertainty in other policy areas, ranging from transport to democracy. By simulating the behaviour of autonomous agents (such as individuals or media organisations) within an environment (such as a platform), ABM can help reveal unpredictable patterns that emerge in complex systems through interactions between different actors. In theory, this technique holds significant potential for platform governance. Reflecting this, an emerging body of research uses ABM to study social media platforms, including dynamics such as polarisation and the effects of regulatory interventions.

There is, however, a large gap between theory and using ABM to inform platform governance in practice. It is unclear how ABM would fit into the DSA's existing risk assessment system, and existing literature on its use in other contexts emphasizes a wide array of risks relevant to the platform context (such as inaccurate or biased output). Therefore, this article asks the following question:

How could simulation techniques such as ABM support platform governance, and what conditions need to be in place before regulators can rely on evidence they produce?

The paper addresses this question in two main ways. First, it develops a conceptual framework for understanding the role and risks of simulations in platform governance. Drawing on literature on agent-based modelling in policymaking, anticipatory governance, and risk assessment under the DSA, it argues that ABM can support platform governance in three distinct ways: (1) by helping regulators identify unforeseen risks and explore the trade-offs and side-effects of potential interventions; (2) by lowering the costs of platform research, enabling researchers to explore a wider range of regulatory options before testing them with real users; and (3) by supporting communication and learning through concrete scenarios that make underlying assumptions explicit.

Second, the paper reports findings from 15 interviews with policymakers and regulators on the role of simulations in platform governance. While existing literature often emphasizes the promise of ABM for policymaking, empirical insight into regulators' perspectives remains scarce. The paper therefore examines regulators' views on the potential and risks of using ABM in platform governance, as well as the safeguards they consider necessary to ensure its responsible use. Interviewees were selected based on their involvement in platform regulation or experience with using simulations, and were drafted from EU (EC, JRC, ECAT) and national (Irish, Romanian, Dutch DSCs) authorities.

CLP01 The Promise and Limits of Digital Services Act Implementation

PP 0019 Auditing LLM Election Answers Under the Digital Services Act (DSA): Methodologies for assessing systemic risk for generative AI systems under the DSA

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Large language models (LLMs), like Gemini, Deepseek, or ChatGPT, increasingly function as "search-like" intermediaries for political information, including questions about election results. In 2026, the European Commission might qualify ChatGPT as one of the first generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) models that underfalls EU regulation as a very large search engine. In that case OpenAI must assess systemic-risk concerns aligned with the Digital Services Act (DSA), including foreseeable negative effects on civic discourse and electoral processes (Art. 34(1)(d) DSA) which may emerge when users receive misleading procedural or political information in authoritative sounding 'advice', and when mitigation measures (e.g., guardrails, hedging, labelling, or recommendations to consult official sources) are absent, inconsistent, or difficult to interpret. This paper operationalizes the systemic risk of negative effects on civic discourse and the electoral process as auditable output in LLM question-answer interactions for the European parliamentary election 2024, focusing on (i) factual reliability and (ii) guardrail occurrence as a risk mitigation measure.

Therefore we ask: How can the DSA's systemic risk of negative effects on civic discourse and electoral processes (Art. 34(1)(d) DSA) be operationalized and measured in generative AI systems (in the case of LLM election Q&A)?

We begin with a hand-annotated corpus of 200 election-related prompts and LLM responses, coded for authenticity (accuracy/incorrectness) and guardrail adherence. To enable scalable auditing, we implement a Python-based synthesis pipeline that expands each prompt into an augmented corpus containing both engineered falsehoods and engineered truths. For each seed prompt, the pipeline generates ten intentionally false answers via an explicit instruction to "make sure to not give the right answer," and ten "good" answers by paraphrasing a correct answer ("keep it the same, but slightly different"), in both cases enforcing a strict numbered-list output format and instructing the model not to return the question text. We show that this design choice, combined with the generator model, creates systematic validity challenges for systemic-risk measurement as a systemic risk evaluation method that takes systemic risk assessment methodologies under the Delegated Regulation of conducting systemic risk assessments and independent audits into account.

The paper contributes (1) a DSA-informed audit design for election-related systemic risks in LLM-mediated information environments and (2) evidence-based guidance on the validity and measurement effects of synthetic data generation, showing that generator choice and prompt constraints materially shape what "electoral-process risk" becomes observable at scale. (3) We provide recommendations for auditing generative AI systems under the DSA.

CLP02 AI Governance

PP 0122 Regulating AI-generated deepfakes: A comparative study of legal frameworks and public perceptions in Japan and The Netherlands

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Deepfakes employ artificial intelligence to make it look like an event took place that never happened. They threaten political stability, social cohesion and individual security. They can be weaponized to manipulate public opinion, discredit political opponents or spread false narratives. As such, they constitute a dangerous form of visual disinformation and cause ethical concerns. Addressing these risks requires legal frameworks that not only deter misuse but also align with public expectations to maintain trust in institutions. Governments worldwide are trying to regulate deepfakes, but legal approaches vary across cultures and political systems. We argue that the acceptance of these regulations depends on whether they resonate with public perceptions. If legal measures fail to align with citizens' concerns and competencies, they may be ineffective in curbing the impact of deepfakes. Yet, we know little about how deepfakes are dealt with in different contexts, even though comparative research is crucial in informing and improving policy making for such a global threat. To fill this gap, this article examines legal regulations of deepfakes and public perceptions thereof in Japan and the Netherlands. These countries were selected due to their contrasting legal frameworks and attitudes toward artificial intelligence, which is the technology underlying deepfakes. This research is both comparative and interdisciplinary in nature, combining communication science and legal studies. How are deepfake regulations developed and perceived among Japanese and Dutch citizens?

The article consists of two components. First, a legal analysis was conducted. The analysis revealed that the two countries tackle the regulation of deepfakes very differently. The EU (incl. the Netherlands) follows an ex-ante approach, where enforcement often remains reactive, the objective is clearly prevention of disinformation. Japan uses an ex-post approach, victims must complain, courts or regulators must act, and relief comes after the deepfake has circulated online. Second, based on this legal analysis, existing legal frameworks are examined in order to evaluate how well they align with citizens' competencies and expectations regarding deepfakes via representative surveys in Japan and the Netherlands. We will measure the following key variables: *risk assessment* of deepfakes; *self-perceived competence and third-person effect* connected to the ability to recognize deepfakes; *deepfake literacy and AI skills*; assessing the *acceptance of deepfakes* in different contexts (e.g., in arts vs. politics); *attitudes toward legal approaches.*

This article aims to uncover cross-country differences in both the legal analysis and empirical research, linked to cultural differences, ethical approaches and political systems. Based on this, concrete suggestions are proposed for policymakers grounded in the insights from the respective countries. These suggestions are informed by learning from each other on a legal level, but also on an individual level. By examining Japan and the Netherlands, we offer policy recommendations for each country inspired by insights from the contrasting country, thus contributing to stronger societies. The article's objective is to help navigate the global societal and regulatory challenge of deepfakes.

CLP02 AI Governance

PP 0123 Voluntary algorithmic censorship: A comparative institutional analysis of sensitive prompt responses in DeepSeek, ChatGPT, and Mistral

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Large Language Models (LLMs) increasingly function as central infrastructures of digital communication, mediating access to knowledge, shaping public discourse, and structuring economic opportunities. While prior research has focused on the risks of harmful or illegal outputs, comparatively little is known about how LLMs themselves govern content through

embedded moderation mechanisms, or how these mechanisms vary across institutional, commercial, and linguistic contexts. This paper addresses that gap by offering a comparative empirical analysis of content moderation practices in three leading LLMs developed under distinct geopolitical regimes: ChatGPT (United States), DeepSeek (China), and Mistral (European Union).

Drawing on an original dataset of 551 sensitive prompts collected from publicly reported refusal cases on social media platforms, we systematically test model responses across free and paid tiers and across English and Chinese language contexts. Using a risk-based classification framework inspired by regulatory approaches in AI governance, we analyze refusal patterns, partial responses, warning strategies, and stylistic differences in moderation. Our findings reveal three core dynamics.

First, moderation practices closely reflect institutional and regulatory environments rather than neutral technical standards. DeepSeek exhibits pronounced sensitivity to political and historical content, particularly topics associated with state legitimacy and collective memory, while ChatGPT prioritizes technical security, system integrity, and behavioral manipulation risks. Mistral adopts a distinctive pedagogical refusal style, frequently contextualizing restrictions with explanations, reflecting European regulatory emphases on transparency and user rights.

Second, commercialization produces systematic stratification in information access. Paid GPT-4o responds to a substantial share of prompts that are categorically refused by free ChatGPT, often without warnings or disclaimers. This creates what we term *subscription-based information asymmetry*, where access to sensitive knowledge becomes contingent on users' ability to pay, despite identical safety justifications. Such differentiation cannot be explained by legal compliance alone and instead points to voluntary moderation decisions shaped by commercial incentives.

Third, moderation is applied unevenly across languages. All three models demonstrate significant asymmetries between English and Chinese, with certain sensitive prompts becoming more accessible when queried in one language rather than another. These multilingual discrepancies suggest language-specific alignment pipelines and culturally contingent risk assumptions, raising concerns about linguistic discrimination and unequal participation in global digital publics.

We conceptualize these dynamics as **voluntary algorithmic censorship**: content restrictions that extend beyond formal legal requirements and are shaped by institutional priorities, market strategies, and cultural assumptions. To assess governance implications, we examine whether the European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) offers a viable regulatory framework for addressing these practices. We argue that the DSA's transparency obligations, systemic risk assessments, and accountability mechanisms could meaningfully constrain opaque and discriminatory moderation practices if adapted to LLM-specific architectures.

Overall, this study demonstrates that LLM moderation is neither universal nor neutral but systematically patterned by power, profit, and place. As LLMs become foundational infrastructures of knowledge production, their voluntary censorship practices raise urgent questions for competition, equality, and democratic governance.

CLP02 AI Governance

PP 0124 Governing AI in European public communication

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The current hybrid media ecosystem (Chadwick, 2017) has led to the emergence of numerous actors beyond news media that shape information flows within democratic societies. In this evolving media ecosystem, artificial intelligence (AI) plays an increasingly central role, as media and other public communication actors rely progressively on AI systems to (autonomously) produce information and communicate with people (Jungherr & Schroeder, 2023). However, while AI technologies can support participatory, dialogic and pluralistic communication processes, e.g. through news recommenders, they also risk reinforcing destructive communication patterns such as hate speech or disinformation that, in turn, may lead to polarization, eroding levels of institutional trust, and increased legitimacy issues in democracies (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

Drawing on a governance (Dafoe, 2018) as well as a media accountability approach (Eberwein et al., 2019), this paper wants to shed light on whether and to what extent different actors in Europe (including news media, public institutions and civil society groups) seek to ensure a responsible use of AI in public communication. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What AI-related themes and risks and values are addressed?
2. What forms of governance and accountability mechanisms are promoted?
3. How do approaches differ between national and supranational stakeholders?

The paper presents findings from a two-step empirical study conducted within a Horizon Europe project involving eight European countries. The first step involved a comprehensive collection of documents (n = 435) (codes, charters and

guidelines) concerning ethical standards in public communication. The second step employed computer-assisted inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to identify key themes and cross-national patterns.

The findings show that AI-related concerns are addressed across three stages of the AI lifecycle: development and operation, legitimation for AI use, and AI deployment. However, ethical considerations remain fragmented and are often only superficially integrated. Although common principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy, and human oversight occur across national and supranational documents, their operationalization remains limited. Lastly, results show that while national guidelines are commonly tailored to everyday applications, supranational documents emphasize normative frameworks grounded on fundamental rights, aiming at harmonizing standards across member states. By highlighting emerging institutional responses to the challenges of AI deployment, our study contributes to current debates on digital democracy, tech governance, and the accountability of AI in shaping public communication in times of disruptive technological changes that affect democracy.

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CLP02 AI Governance

PP 0125 Controversies and challenges in GenAI content moderation: Shifting rules in the emergence of a new governance regime

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The challenges of content moderation are shifting from social media to generative AI (GenAI). To what extent should companies seek to curb the spread of hate speech and misinformation on their platforms, and what are the consequences if they fail to do so? How can the development of emerging technologies and services be aligned with public interest, and how is public interest identified? The rapid uptake and deep integration of GenAI services into our personal and professional lives exacerbates these challenges of private rule-setting rather than relieving them. The advanced forms of automation and data processing embedded in the complex digital infrastructures that enable GenAI services, such as ChatGPT, make it difficult to understand the politics of GenAI outputs.

Alongside the rise of GenAI, there has also been an increase in controversies surrounding the challenges of content moderation. Providers are criticised for spreading misinformation in election contexts, enabling blatant copyright infringement and the appropriation of artists' creative work, and failing to take responsibility or intervene when users with mental health issues endanger or even end their lives after conversations with chatbots.

This paper addresses the development of GenAI governance by companies as an emergent process that is currently unfolding. Building on insights from social media governance, we can understand how tech companies' governance of GenAI interactions emerges over time in response to public and political pressure. Such an approach requires a longitudinal study of evolving GenAI discourse and the changing rulesets for and by GenAI providers.

Alongside this conceptual perspective, the paper presents the initial findings of an empirical study building on a mixed-methods analysis of media reporting on GenAI, product policies and guidelines, and corporate communication on product websites and corporate newsrooms for the time period (2021–2025). The results indicate that, (1) in normative controversies on GenAI, misinformation, mental health and creative practices constitute key themes of contestation. These tensions are already beginning (2) to manifest in product policies and guidelines. For example, providers reaffirm the need to respect creators, their work, and their intellectual property, and to prevent imitation of the work of individual living artists. They defer liability for infringements to users. In their corporate communication (3), companies present their services as powerful tools that enable a wide range of activities and carefully balance normative tensions regarding liability for dangerous and contested forms of usage.

Overall, these results are indicative of a negotiation process regarding norm setting between private companies, public debates and regulation, which strongly resembles debates on the responsibility and power of social media platforms. Studying these questions of platform governance from social media to GenAI is becoming ever more critical. The current confluence of high political polarization, rapid technological developments and foundational planetary transformations challenges the cohesion of contemporary societies. Tech companies, developing platforms and GenAI tools, play a substantial role in these

dynamics by (re)organizing public discourse, thereby affecting societal norms, and policy-making processes, not necessarily for the better of democracy and human well-being.

CLP02 AI Governance

PP 0126 Regulating artificial intelligence in authoritarian contexts: Russia's "ethics" approach to becoming an AI power

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In 2022, two events have significantly transformed the dynamics of worldwide digital cooperation: Russia's war on Ukraine and Open AI's introduction of ChatGPT and the rapid following development of generative large language models (LLMs) (Fui-Hoon et al., 2023). Russia's unprecedented attack on Ukraine has formed a new international relations dynamic, within which big tech companies took the role, previously taken by the states, i.e. "taking sides" in political conflict and imposing a digital blockade on Russia (Aviv & Ferri, 2023), leading to Russia much more actively, than before, striving to achieve "digital autonomy" from global technology providers and develop its own technology (Aviv & Ferri, 2023). At the same time, Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly underlined, that Russia's ambition is to become a world leader in creating AI technologies, as well as in Russian LLMs and AI products being adopted worldwide (e.g. Putin, 2024). As Smuha (2021) convincingly argues, the race to AI triggers the race to AI regulation, as the established AI regulatory regime can establish legal certainty for stakeholders involved, and ensure the trust in the technology, while simultaneously facilitating its uptake, hence advancing the country's competitive position as an AI market player worldwide (Smuha 2021, P.59). However, the question remains – what kind of *leader* Russia strives to become, how is it ingrained in official regulatory documents and how has it changed after 2022, in the light of the sanctions, imposed on Russia in the aftermath Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Nadebaidze 2025, P.134)?

AI systems are always a part of a broader socio-technical environment, and their trustworthiness requires trustworthiness of all actors and processes involved. Existing research on Russia's AI strategy has examined how Russia's AI narrative is reflected in official's statements and in Russia's state-sponsored media (Nadibaidze, 2024; 2025), described Russia's regulatory regime and bodies (e.g. Chan et al., 2024, Papyshev & Yarime 2024; Szakonyi et al., 2024), the role of Russia's state-owned firms in Russia's AI strategy (Petrella et al., 2021). However, existing articles on the Russia's regularoty regime (e.g. Chan et al., 2024, Papyshev & Yarime 2024; Szakonyi et al., 2024) only discuss the hard regulations and the official bodies that regulate the AI in Russia, while Petrella et al. (2021) look at the connections of the companies, involved in regulating AI in Russia, with the government, as well as the Russia's official narrative, discussed by Nadibaidze (2024; 2025) is based on statements and media reports, not on official documents. This contribution, in contrast with existing literature, analyses the hard regulation frameworks, that exsist in Russia, but also the "soft" regulations, which are as of 2025 prevalent in the Russian AI landscape and answers the following research question.

What are the major regulations, that govern the development of the AI in Russia as of 2025, and how have these regulations transformed after 2022? How does Russia present itself in these documents, what are the narratives of Russia as AI player, described in these documents?

CLP04 Power and Influence in Media and Communications Policy Processe

PP 0339 The agency of industry elites in media policy processes

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In this paper we ask how agency is expressed by journalism elites in media policy-making processes. We operationalise the policy process as consisting of formal and informal dynamics where formal dynamics include a seat at the table where deliberation and decision making happens, and informal dynamics encompass problem definition, coalition building, bargaining, and lobbying.

To access what agency is, we apply the life-course approach, an interview method designed to focus on retrospective oral histories, personal narratives, and the unique experiences and contributions of the individual. Agency is furthermore operationalised through Strategic Action Field theory, an institutional approach that focuses on social skills, alliance-building, and informal networks in attaining strategic goals. Structure is operationalised through media systems properties and the formal and informal process of policymaking during the 30 years of digital transition in journalism in Canada, Germany, Norway, and Spain.

To get around the problem of strategic discourse in media policy research, we talk exclusively with retired industry professionals (n = 31). As the universe of retired CEOs is small, our sample reflects the limited availability, as well as the homogeneity, of elite actors. Our sample consists of 31 informants, 28 of which are male and three of which are female,

nine from Canada, eight from Germany, eight from Norway, and six from Spain. Represented in the sample are former CEOs, publishers, managers, directors, editors, regulators and union/association/federation leaders.

Interviews are analysed using thematic analysis, where the agency theme is analysed in light of Strategic Action Field theory. We find that elites act strategically at formal and informal levels, using their position, social skills, and professional resources to attain their goals, in line with core assumptions in the theoretical framework. However, our analysis also shows that while social skills are important in building policy influence, position within the strategic action field matters more in forming narratives, setting the agenda, and accessing policymaking processes, highlighting the role of institutional arrangements in media systems.

To that end, informants give media policy varying degrees of importance to their professional lives – more so in Canada and Norway than in Germany and Spain – reflecting the fact that the relative reach of media policy also matters for how agency is mobilised to engender influence. The contribution of this study is thus to bring nuance to the theory of Strategic Action Fields in how these are positioned in relation to other fields, particularly the state.

CLP04 Power and Influence in Media and Communications Policy Processe

PP 0340 Journalistic access to information as a policy process

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Freedom of information (FOI) laws have become a cornerstone of democratic governance, formally guaranteeing citizens and journalists the right to access public information. However, comparative research has shown that the effectiveness of these legal frameworks varies significantly across countries and institutional settings. This paper examines how journalists secure access to information within FOI regimes, conceptualizing access not merely as a legal entitlement but as a transnational policy process shaped by law, administrative practices, and communicative interaction.

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design grounded in documentary analysis, large-scale quantitative data, qualitative content analysis, and semi-structured interviews. Its empirical foundation combines original data with comparative evidence drawn from FOI systems in Scotland, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, and other national contexts discussed in the literature and analyzed throughout the research. While Brazil offers the most comprehensive empirical dataset in our analysis, this study systematically draws on comparative findings from Canada and Scotland—both prominent in international FOI research—as well as from Mexico and other national contexts. This approach reveals shared patterns and structural differences in the governance and practice of access to information.

The theoretical framework draws on classical and contemporary reflections on publicity, secrecy, and democratic accountability (Bentham, 2011; Kant, 2008; Arendt, 2018; Bobbio, 2015), as well as on policy-oriented approaches to transparency and information governance (Ackerman & Sandoval-Ballesteros, 2006; Michener & Bersch, 2013; Gomes, Amorim & Almada, 2018). In our study, FOI laws are analyzed as instruments of public communication and public action (Lascoumes & Le Galès, 2012), whose implementation depends on organizational cultures, administrative discretion, and risk management practices within the state.

Across the cases examined, the findings indicate that journalists' requests are frequently treated as politically sensitive, particularly in policy areas related to national security, foreign affairs, and economic governance. In Scotland and Canada, previous studies highlight tensions between formal transparency standards and administrative caution. Research on Mexico and Brazil reveals how historical legacies of secrecy and uneven institutional capacity shape access outcomes. In every context, journalists gain access not by default through legal provisions but by drawing on professional expertise, crafting strategic requests, demonstrating persistence, and leveraging their understanding of bureaucratic processes.

By comparing multiple FOI regimes, the paper suggests that journalistic access to information is consistently mediated by informal policy practices operating alongside formal legal norms. This comparative perspective challenges compliance-based evaluations of FOI systems and instead advances a process-oriented understanding of access to information. The study contributes to Communication Law and Policy debates by offering a transferable analytical framework for examining how transparency laws function in practice across democratic systems, with implications for FOI reform, regulatory oversight, and the protection of journalism as a democratic institution.

CLP04 Power and Influence in Media and Communications Policy Processe

PP 0341 Governing the governors: Tech industry influence on AI policy

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This presentation analyses the strategic methods through which technology companies have systematically co-opted artificial intelligence policymaking processes in both the European Union and the United States.

Our research draws upon political economy scholarship, governance studies, and regulatory theory, integrating qualitative analysis of policy documents, media coverage, and materials secured through freedom of information mechanisms in Estonia. The investigation traces AI policy development across the Atlantic from 2019 to 2025, revealing a multi-layered influence architecture.

Rather than operating as neutral stakeholders in regulatory development, big tech functions as architects of the very frameworks designed to govern their activities. The current wave of AI legislation, including the EU AI Act and emerging US regulatory initiatives, has been fundamentally shaped by industry intervention, raising critical questions about the legitimacy and effectiveness of democratic governance in the platform economy. Whilst traditional industries have long engaged in regulatory manipulation, technology companies have pioneered novel tactics specifically calibrated for the AI domain: embedding personnel within government agencies through revolving doors, financing ostensibly independent academic research, and positioning themselves as indispensable partners in regulatory experimentation and policy co-design.

Examining contested regulatory areas, including algorithmic accountability, privacy safeguards, platform content governance, and safety protocols, our analysis exposes how corporate actors engineer deliberate weaknesses into regulatory frameworks. These vulnerabilities consistently favour market expansion over citizen protection. Our analysis reveals a consistent pattern: rather than reacting defensively to regulatory proposals, technology companies strategically anticipate, weaken, and obstruct any policy measures that could threaten their monopolistic positions. This represents corporate power operating not merely as influence, but as governance itself.

We conceptualise this dynamic as AI regulatory capture, a phenomenon qualitatively different from classical regulatory capture due to three distinctive features: the esoteric technical knowledge required to understand AI systems, the unprecedented velocity of technological change, and the profound imbalance in expertise between under-resourced public institutions and well-funded private actors. Our presentation advocates for institutional reforms that can sustain democratic, accountable AI policymaking resistant to corporate colonisation, whilst preserving space for innovation genuinely aligned with collective welfare.

CLP04 Power and Influence in Media and Communications Policy Processe

PP 0342 A critical policy analysis of Denmark's "tech diplomat"

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In 2017, Denmark became the first country to appoint a "Tech Ambassador" to represent the country's technological interests. The Ambassador's primary goal was to "encourage investment into Denmark from the [US] West Coast tech companies, and [promote] Danish exports to Silicon Valley startups," as well as sharing Danish culture with tech giants (Stokel-Walker, 2017). From then, as of 2025, over 70 consulates and embassies operate in Silicon Valley (Buckup & Canazza, 2023). Many of these consulates represent other European nations. This sudden proliferation of tech diplomats is part of the growing trend of "tech diplomacy." Tech diplomacy is the practice of diplomacy between a nation and a private technology company (or sector) rather than between two nations, or "strategically engaging with [private] technological stakeholders for diplomatic objectives" (Mashiah, 2023: p. 1). The practice of tech diplomacy through the appointment of the first Tech Ambassador makes clear the power of the tech industry, to where nations must negotiate with corporations as if they were governments.

This paper fills a critical gap in scholarship on the burgeoning practice of tech diplomacy by offering a critical analysis of strategic plans of the Danish tech Ambassador – the first of its kind – from 2021–2025. Through document analysis (Karpinnen & Moe, 2019) of the published strategies of the Danish Tech Ambassador over the past four years, the paper's aim is to reveal and unpack the complex motivations of tech diplomacy. To ground its findings, this paper relies on the tenets of critical political economy. Critical political economy (CPE) at its core is the study of power relations, focusing on the critique of market fundamentalism and the failures of the principles of liberalism (Mosco, 2009). CPE aims to propose democratized solutions to the problems presented by liberal policy.

Findings reveal a contradiction within Danish tech diplomacy policy. Indeed, while the Danish Tech Ambassador purports their mission to be one of democratization, in line with the socialist democratic principles of the nation, and through the promotion of European regulatory frameworks, the plans of the Tech Ambassador reiterate a continued focus on increasing Europe's economic position as an industry power in the technology sector. This reveals the liberal agenda of the Danish Tech Ambassador and provides a frame of analysis for tech diplomats appointed throughout Europe, contributing an important and novel analysis in communication law and policy.

CLP04 Power and Influence in Media and Communications Policy Processe

PP 0343 Media policy and platform regulations in transition: Disinformation regulatory frameworks and governance logics in Egypt

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The acceleration of the dissemination of misinformation and disinformation has severe implications for both democratic and non-democratic societies. Although digital platforms and social media platforms have facilitated global communication, expression of viewpoints, and activism in the MENA region, they have also become channels for misinformation, disinformation, and political manipulation worldwide. While there is extensive and rigorous attention to platform regulations and government responses to misinformation, disinformation, and online deception in democracies, authoritarian regimes, including countries in the MENA region, remain underrepresented.

This study examines media policy and platform regulations in Egypt as a case study, with particular emphasis on disinformation regulations and their governance logics. Drawing on power and governance theoretical frameworks, the study aims at 1) exploring platform governance logics and regulations modes in Egypt for disinformation and misinformation, 2) understanding the power dynamics of governance actors and stakeholders, and 3) identifying implications of current policies and regulations and proposing policy alternatives for countering misinformation and disinformation.

This study employs triangulation of qualitative methods, including text and document analysis of laws and policies pertaining to digital and social media platforms, with a focus on disinformation and misinformation, and qualitative in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers, experts, officials, politicians, platforms, industry, and media practitioners, reflecting laws and regulations governing disinformation and their implications. Drawing on primary qualitative data, this paper presents a conceptual framework that enriches the literature on platform governance and regulation in non-Western contexts. We deepen our understanding of governance modes across regions worldwide and broaden the lens for comparative perspectives. In addition, it deepens our understanding of which actors shape the power of platform governance and online content regulation within such contextual frameworks, which content is deemed controversial and classified as disinformation, and with what mechanisms it is governed. The findings show a fragmented regulatory lanscape, and typology of three modes of disinformation governance: selective-enforcement, collaborative governance, and disputed policy and online content governance. The study suggests a multi-stakeholder approach model, including civil society actors and independent oversight.

CLP05 Re-Thinking and Reforming Communications Policy Making

PP 0455 The long and winding road: Developing dialogic bottom-up policy recommendations for the polarised and disinformed societies

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Digital communication has generally been associated with the idea of a new and booming participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006). However, this shift has been reflected only to a limited extent in policy shaping. This paper proposes research- and evidence-based policy recommendations for digital media communication, stemming from a bottom-up participatory approach that could enrich the democratic potential within the development of communication law and policies.

The theoretical approach builds on dialogic communication theory (Couldry, 2010; Carpentier, 2011), which conceptualises public communication as a relational and reciprocal process in which actors jointly construct meaning and negotiate responsibilities, rather than participating through one-directional consultation. Within policymaking, dialogic approaches have been shown to strengthen legitimacy and accountability (Fung, 2015; Kerr, 2024).

The paper is based on an application-oriented perspective on policy analysis, aimed at achieving specific objectives, and adopts a normative analytical stance to evaluate policy alternatives and prescribe action (Dunn, 2018), including the formulation of policy recommendations.

The paper applies the research and results of the project DIACOMET, conducted over the past 2 years across eight European countries (Austria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Switzerland). The policy recommendations are developed through four major research strands: (1) an analysis of 429 ethical codes and normative communication guidelines; (2) a multi-stage Delphi study with experts; (3) the implementation of the Q-sorting method with diverse audiences; and (4) 87 focus groups involving more than 500 participants across professional, generational, and minority groups. The methodological design enabled an empirically grounded bottom-up contribution to communication policy by integrating the perspectives of groups that are commonly absent from formal consultations.

The analysis identified four key areas for policy recommendations: disinformation and foreign interference; polarisation and radicalisation; the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and new technologies on democracy; and data privacy, security, and surveillance.

The DIACOMET findings highlight a shared concern regarding the increasing vulnerability of public communication environments, shaped by commercial, technological, and political pressures. These pressures undermine the conditions for trustworthy, inclusive, and accountable public discourse, rendering societies more susceptible to misinformation, polarisation, and manipulation. Restoring trust and integrity, based on the principles of dialogic communication, therefore requires more than isolated interventions; it demands systemic accountability, transparent digital infrastructures, and communication practices grounded in dialogue rather than confrontation.

The paper emphasises how participatory and dialogic approaches can address persistent disconnections between formal regulatory processes and everyday communicative practices. It advances normative questions of legitimacy, accountability, and inclusion by grounding them in empirical civic experiences, rather than relying solely on institutional or technological expertise, and illustrates how civic accountability mechanisms may operate across self- and co-regulatory, and statutory frameworks, complementing recent EU regulatory framework such as the Digital Services Act, the European Media Freedom Act, and the Artificial Intelligence Act.

As the DIACOMET project is ongoing, the policy recommendations are currently being developed as a temporary milestone, and the final version will be submitted to the European Commission in May and then available to be presented and discussed at the conference.

CLP05 Re-Thinking and Reforming Communications Policy Making

PP 0456 Telecommunications policy: The case for empathy

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Recent years have seen a turn to the study of empathy in critical studies of public policy. Studies show empathy can help amplify minority perspectives on policy issues and diversify what counts as evidence in the policymaking process. Further afield, empathy contributes to a deliberative democracy, underscoring conversation, understanding, and compassion. In studies of communication policy, however, concern for empathy has not been a priority. In media policy, that which refers to content and production, empathy may be thought to be included in public interest standards, public service media organizations, and in sensitivity to cultural differences, tastes, and domestic production. Telecommunications policy, in contrast, is cold and impersonal: wires, frequencies, and orbits. Such seeming impersonality has led to a telecommunications policy ecosystem that has entirely abstracted human beings and human experiences. This, in turn, has allowed telecommunications policy to operate entirely in service of private telecommunications providers, actively harming communities by driving up prices and interrupting universal service goals. Debates around Europe's proposed Digital Networks Act exemplify this disruption. Communities lose when battles are between network operators and when only the voices of the regulated count as policy evidence. To correct this dehumanized architecture, this paper envisions a telecommunications policy environment that is human, people-centered, and empathetic.

Underscored by literature on empathy and deliberation in public policy, this paper draws on ethnographic-based fieldwork (participant observation and interviews) in the United States with un- and under-connected communities. Specifically, the paper draws on examples from the city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (an urban city of approximately 300,000 people), that developed a mobile Cyberbus; the Hoopa Valley Indian Tribe in Northern California (a rural, Indigenous community of approximately 3,000 people), which created its own wireless network; and the State of Vermont (a small rural state of approximately, 650,000 people), which created a policy architecture that invites community participation. Connecting these examples and communities, the argument is made for the inclusion of empathy within telecommunications policy.

Drawing on these American examples, this paper urges regulators and policymakers globally to adopt four empathy-based telecommunications recommendations: meaningful engagement from communities in policymaking actions; a focus on access to infrastructure rather than infrastructure availability; a commitment to affordable universal service; and the inclusion of public interest mandates akin to those found in broadcasting for internet service providers. While the research is based in the United States, the lessons from this research are global as the domination of telecommunications policy by private industry is a universal rather than a local problem. This paper contributes to the ECREA Communication Law & Policy Division's call for abstracts regarding policies for communication infrastructure.

CLP05 Re-Thinking and Reforming Communications Policy Making

PP 0457 The many faces of the user in Internet governance: A typology of user roles

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Over the past two decades internet governance has undergone a profound transformation, giving rise to hybrid governance arrangements that now encompass national and international statutory regulation, platform-supported self- and co-regulation, civil society initiatives, and, increasingly, active user participation. In the EU, the latter is reflected in the Digital Services Act, which has introduced obligations that strengthen user rights by enabling them to notify illegal content, receive explanations for content moderation to enhance transparency, and challenge such decisions through dispute procedures. In this evolving regulatory landscape, users are no longer passive recipients of services or mere subjects of protection but increasingly active participants and bearer of legal rights and responsibilities, agents of empowerment, and even co-governors.

Although early scholarship linked users to broader processes of transformed statehood in the context of convergence, for example by noting a shift from centralized state protection to decentralized user self-protection, analyses of platform governance still rarely place the role of users at their core. Existing research often focuses on governance by states, companies, and NGOs. When user agency is recognized, for example in discussions of participatory governance or participatory accountability, analyses tend to address specific forms of user involvement in regulation rather than providing a comprehensive account of the multifaceted roles users now play in digital platform governance. Such a narrow focus overlooks how recent (self-)regulatory reforms are redefining the role of users within governance arrangements.

To address this gap, we developed a differentiated typology of user roles in internet governance. Drawing on qualitative, iterative analysis of regulatory frameworks, academic literature and governance instruments from 32 platforms, we identified the roles that users assume when state and platform governance instruments are deployed in practice. The typology ranges from users as vulnerable individuals in need of protection, to those whose beliefs and behaviours are subject to steering, to rule-breakers requiring discipline, to legal subjects endowed with rights, to informed actors supported in building knowledge and digital literacy, to autonomous decision-makers exercising choice, and finally to co-governors actively shaping governance arrangements.

The typology provides a lens for analysing how users are positioned and addressed through governance instruments such as prohibitions, nudges, notification systems, news-feed configurations, and account suspensions, for identifying the roles they ultimately assume. With this, we move beyond the state-industry binary and the narrow view of users as content producers and consumers and we offer a framework for understanding how users are positioned within evolving platform governance, and how they are protected, empowered, and held to account. This, in turn, offers a conceptual and methodological basis for analyses of user roles across policy fields, to examine whether current reforms privilege certain user roles (e.g., protection) over others (e.g., empowerment), and to explore whether broader shifts toward more active or passive conceptualizations of user agency are emerging. We demonstrate the analytical value of the typology by applying it to the field of content moderation, showing how it enables systematic analysis of user positioning within a central domain of contemporary platform governance.

CLP05 Re-Thinking and Reforming Communications Policy Making

PP 0458 Fostering unicorns: Institutional optimism in the EU digital agenda

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Innovation is a central yet ambiguous goal in the European Union's digital agenda. Within the AI Act, innovation is positioned as both an economic imperative and a normative good, associated with safeguarding fundamental rights. Innovation is also closely connected to techno-optimism, the belief that technological innovation is inherently beneficial and economically necessary (Nye, 2007). Contemporary techno-optimism is strongly shaped by Silicon Valley's "Californian Ideology" (Barbrook & Cameron, 1996). In this regard, scholars have shown how cyberlibertarian ideals conceal deregulatory, anti-democratic ideologies rooted in neoliberal markets and right-wing political thought (e.g., Golumbia, 2024; Massanari, 2024). Much of the existing scholarship has examined these dynamics within the US context, but little is known about how these ideologies shape European governance frameworks. Addressing this gap, I focus on current developments in the EU digital agenda. I ask: *how is innovation understood, mobilized, and justified within the EU digital acquis?*

Empirically, the paper draws on ten interviews with EU policy experts involved in drafting and negotiating the AI Act, as well as related digital legislation such as the GDPR, DSA and DMA. Following previous studies in platform governance research (e.g., Gorwa, 2024), I explore whose visions of innovation shape legislative priorities amid recent geopolitical shifts, and how narratives of innovation shape regulatory choices, enforcement practices, and attributions of responsibility for the effects of technological advancements.

Preliminary findings reveal three forms of innovation: First, innovation is understood in terms of scale and economic growth, aligning closely with American techno-optimist ideals. Interviewees emphasized that innovation is frequently equated with enabling firms to grow and compete internationally. Second, innovation functions as an empty signifier: a vague, largely symbolic term inserted into policy discourse for normative resonance rather than a clear definition or measurable regulatory objective. Third, innovation operates as a political tool to justify specific regulatory choices and practices, including how the European Commission enforces the AI Act. This becomes particularly visible under external pressure from the US government in 2025. Interviewees consistently described an acceleration of influence from the US government and Big Tech companies on EU digital policymaking, especially over the past year, and expressed concern about growing pressure to deregulate in the name of innovation. Some interviewees characterized this pressure as "blackmailing."

Despite these concerns, interviewees agreed that Europe's value-driven regulatory approach can and should persist. I conceptualize this stance as institutional optimism: a belief in regulatory institutions' capacity to harness technological change while safeguarding democratic values. Institutional optimism does not stand in opposition to techno-optimism, but reflects the conviction that institutional intervention is necessary to realize the benefits of technological innovation while mitigating potential harms. At the same time, this optimism is marked by ambivalence, shaped as much by awareness of current geopolitical constraints as by confidence in the EU's digital agenda. In other words, the current tech governance discourse is shaped as much by concern as it is by conviction.

CLP05 Re-Thinking and Reforming Communications Policy Making

PP 0459 Multistakeholder discourses in the BBC's 2027 Charter renewal period: Mapping a debate over the future of public service media in the UK and beyond

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Public media systems around the world, including those in the UK, are facing sustained efforts to erode their core public service missions. The 2027 renewal of the BBC Charter and accompanying agreement with the Department for Culture, Media & Sport opens a window for intense public consultation, discussion and debate concerning the public value of the BBC, its purposes and continuing relevance, its accountabilities and governance and its funding model. This is a crucial process with significant consequences for the mediated social, cultural, and news environment in the UK, and it also serves as a test of the quality of deliberation and public engagement in shaping a major cultural institution. The debate has already begun as various stakeholders outline their initial positions and members of the public participate in processes of public engagement and deliberation. In this paper we will summarize the range of participants, processes of consultation and public engagement and reactions to the deliberative process of Charter renewal. Our core research questions concern the extent to which the debate about the future of the BBC as a leading public broadcaster represents a pluralistic process engaging diverse participants and views or a process that is captured by hegemonic stakeholders' views, potentially to the detriment of public engagement in the process shaping the BBC and, ultimately, broader civic engagement in vital public affairs. We will present critical analysis of early public discussion, debate and contention and the provision of approaches to public engagement and commentary on the public value of the BBC and its role in social, cultural and political life. We will map participants in the early stages of the debate, including political institutions, NGOs, advocacy groups, and the media, and examine attempts at public engagement through consultation or research with a focus on arguments regarding the public interest in the work of the BBC. Through these analyses we aim to contribute to academic studies on the role of the BBC and public service media more generally, the quality of deliberation surrounding the Charter renewal process, and the characteristics of public understanding and engagement in this pivotal moment in public life. We anticipate that legacy issues from previous Charter renewal processes will remain salient in the present, open policy window, such as the role and purpose of the BBC, its funding model, issues of governance, and the representation of diverse views, opinions and communities. We also anticipate and will analyse early examples of discourses on emergent technological and social concerns, including the digitalisation and fragmentation of media markets, rise of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) and proliferation of misinformation (Cañedo et al., 2022; Chivers and Allan, 2024; Gibbons, 2017; Sehl, Fletcher, and Picard, 2020), will have a significant impact on these debates, contentions and, ultimately, the future of the BBC.

- Cañedo, A., Rodriguez-Castro, M., and López-Cepeda, A.M. (2022). "Distilling the Value of Public Service Media: Towards a Tenable Conceptualisation in the European Framework.", European Journal of Communication, vol. 37, no. 6, pp. 586–605.

CLP06 Contemporary debates for Public Service Media governance and remits in Europe

PN 47 The future of public service media in the context of broadcast decline: the case of the UK

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Over 99% of UK households have free access to broadcast TV – included regulated public service media (PSM) providing trusted news and high-quality programmes that support democracy and culture. Yet, broadcasting is in structural decline, as audiences increasingly watch via internet-delivered television (IPTV), presenting significant challenges to social cohesion and the future of public service media (PSM). Those that are older, disabled and/or on lower incomes risk being left behind because they cannot afford, or lack the skills to use, broadband and IPTV (Vernon et al, 2024). Meanwhile, the lack of regulation for IPTV threatens the viability of PSM, which supports the UK's creative economy and democracy. This paper takes the case of the UK as a starting point for examining the impact of broadcast decline on policy debates about the future of PSM. It examines two parallel policy debates in the UK: the future of TV distribution and BBC Charter renewal. In 2025, the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport convened a year-long Stakeholder Forum consisting of representatives from across infrastructure, technology, broadcasting and civil society to review the future of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) and will publish its recommendations in 2026. The BBC have publicly pushed for DTT switch-off in the mid-2030s, arguing that the costs of maintaining dual distribution via broadcast and internet-delivered television are becoming unsustainable. The paper will analyse the policy debates and documents stemming from this process with a particular focus on the ways in which arguments related to the future of PSM are mobilised by competing stakeholders. It will then examine the extent to which questions of the long term (post-2034) future of DTT emerge in the debates and responses to the government's Green Paper on BBC Charter which is open for consultation from December 2025 to March 2026. Both policy debates demand long-term thinking, given that current DTT licences in the UK run until 2034 and that the next BBC Charter period will likely run until at least 2038. The UK case offers a useful opportunity to examine the extent to which multistakeholderism (Van den Bulck and Raats, 2022) limits the ability for policymakers to tackle longer term structural shifts in the media ecology and asks what this might mean for the ability of policymakers to address the challenges facing PSM today. Given that debates about the future of DTT are playing out in other contexts, such as France, Sweden and Finland, this paper aims to offer a useful starting point for analysing the structural decline of broadcasting and its impact on PSM policymaking.

CLP06 Contemporary debates for Public Service Media governance and remits in Europe

PN 48 The illusion of independence: Depoliticization, hybrid funding, and dual capture in flemish public service media governance

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Across Europe, public service media (PSM) governance has increasingly relied on depoliticizing instruments such as management contracts, performance indicators, and multistakeholder, evidence-based policymaking procedures. Emerging from broader shifts in public management and multi-level governance, these mechanisms are intended to secure arm's-length independence from political interference while enhancing transparency, accountability and regulatory legitimacy. Yet persistent controversies around remit, funding and market impact raise questions about whether such governance arrangements effectively insulate PSM from political and commercial pressures or, instead, reconfigure them. This paper examines this paradox through an in-depth analysis of the most recent renewal of the management contract of Flemish public broadcaster VRT. Building on prior research on "mature" multistakeholderism and evidence-based policymaking in European PSM governance, we advance the notion of "an illusion of independence" to capture how formal governance arrangements can perform regulatory autonomy while enabling continued and, in some respects, intensified forms of capture. Empirically, the study combines analysis of the policy cycle leading up to the management contract renewal with a critical analysis of the contract itself and surrounding policy documents. The analysis examines how independence is structured and constrained across successive stages of the process, including commissioned research and stakeholder consultations, advisory council input, parliamentary hearings, ministerial negotiations and final government approval. Particular attention is paid to contractual language that defers key decisions to political authorities, introduces conditionality ("to be finalized by government") or embeds discretionary oversight that sits uneasily with the logic of arm's-length governance. Rather than insulating decision-making from politics, these arrangements allow political authorities to retain discretionary control at key moments of the policy process. The findings demonstrate how hybrid funding arrangements contribute to a dual form of capture. While the ceiling on commercial revenues for VRT has been reached, commercial income has not reduced political dependence. Instead, it has provided additional leverage for private media actors through "level playing field" claims rooted in competition frameworks and has intensified pressures on PSM to engage in market-oriented collaborations. These dynamics resonate with broader critiques of evidence-based policymaking and multistakeholderism which caution against overestimating data neutrality and instrumental rationality while underplaying power asymmetries and path dependencies. We argue that depoliticizing governance instruments do not fail merely due to imperfect implementation. Rather, they

operate within a policy environment where political authorities retain decisive discretion and core principles of regulatory independence, including clear separation of roles, predictable commitments, stable funding horizons and respect for contractual autonomy, are only partially upheld. While focused on the Flemish case, the paper speaks to wider European debates on regulatory (in)dependence, PSM governance, and the limits of contemporary communication policy under conditions of fiscal pressure and competitive media markets.

CLP06 Contemporary debates for Public Service Media governance and remits in Europe

PN 49 Public service media impartiality under political scrutiny: Analysis of questions and interpellations on VRT news reporting in the Flemish Parliament

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Impartiality has historically underpinned Public Service Media (PSM) news reporting. By adhering to impartiality, PSM aim to provide high-quality trustworthy journalism by presenting news through a diversity of views and actors present in society according to their due weight and by providing sufficient contextualisation (Sambrook & Cushion, 2024). Discussions on impartiality have increased gradually in the last two decades, with scholars observing an increase in criticism and accusations of bias, false balance and 'wokeness' (Pakvis et al., 2025). In 2025 criticisms of PSM operationalisations of impartiality were further exacerbated due to an edited speech by Donald Trump in a BBC documentary deemed to have mislead audiences, culminating in the resignations of BBC director general Tim Davie and CEO of News Deborah Turness. Against this backdrop, our study analyses policy discussions on impartiality through the lens of parliamentary questions. In many PSM systems, the parliament is not only involved in multistakeholder discussions on charter renewals but also fulfils a specific monitoring assignment (Campos-Freire et al., 2021; Jakubowicz, 2011; Van den Bulck & Raats, 2022). This is the case in Flanders, where the Flemish parliament, as the authority responsible for cultural competences, oversees the execution of VRT's public service contract, with parliamentarians being able to address the Minister of Media on matters related to VRT (Van den Bulck & Donders, 2014). Furthermore, the case is salient given the relevance of multistakeholder processes in Flemish PSM policy (Van den Bulck & Raats, 2022), the centrality of impartiality for the public broadcaster and its yearly oversight (VRT & Flemish Government, 2020; 2025). The article analyses how politicians discuss VRT's impartiality in the Flemish parliament. Our dataset consists of 111 parliamentary questions and interpellations explicitly referring to VRT's impartiality in news reporting and interrelated values (e.g. objectivity, independence, neutrality) between 2014 and 2025, taking place during the current and two previous Flemish governments. We analyse questions and ensuing exchanges by means of a thematic analysis (Herzog et al., 2019) investigating (i) patterns across time, political parties and representatives regarding impartiality, (ii) which aspects of VRT's remit and performance are problematised, and (iii) how other politicians and the media minister respond to critical interventions. This design allows us to identify who speaks most about VRT, how the broadcaster is attacked and defended, and which specific values and expectations parties attach to VRT's information remit. Preliminary analysis of documents indicates that concerns ranged from government influence on specific programmes hampering impartiality to the perceived neutrality of VRT's news and current affairs coverage. The radical-right party Vlaams Belang positions itself as the most vocal parliamentary critic of VRT's impartiality, questioning its standards for high quality by addressing news reporting as well as internal functioning of the public broadcaster. By revealing how different political actors discuss the value of impartiality in relation to VRT, the paper contributes to debates on PSM legitimacy and accountability, and to research on how political discussion and symbolism shape the development of public service media remit and operations.

CLP06 Contemporary debates for Public Service Media governance and remits in Europe

PN 50 Polish Television (TVP) in the Age of Platforms

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For many years, public service media (PSM) in Poland have been subjected to increasing political pressure and market marginalisation. Imprecise systemic regulations have enabled political parties to gain functional control over PSMs, turning them into instruments of government propaganda and media capture rather than tools for the exchange of knowledge, culture, and literacy, or for public deliberation. Consequently, PSMs have lost credibility and have been affected by a chilling effect stemming from internal structural adaptations. This continues to pose a challenge following the 2023 political transition, which led to the liquidation of Polish Radio (Polskie Radio – PR) and Polish Television (Telewizja Polska – TVP), and has, in turn, had a profound impact on subsequent waves of societal-cultural polarisation. This paper draws on data and qualitative analysis from "Public Service Media in the Age of Platforms" (PSM-AP), an international CHANSE-funded research project conducted between 2022 and 2025. Research into legal frameworks and qualitative studies conducted in five countries — Belgium, Denmark, Poland, Italy, and the United Kingdom — reveals differing speeds and levels of digital strategy implementation, as well as varying capacities to distinguish themselves from global platforms. For TVP, one of the case studies, this concerns both the extent of progress in implementing personalised and curated content exposure and the dynamics of organisational, cultural, mindset-related, and intergenerational change. This study summarises the three-year

work of the Polish PSM-AP research team at the University of Warsaw. In-depth interviews (N = 8) were conducted with TVP employees in the spring of 2024. Comparative analysis within the PSM-AP framework identifies Telewizja Polska (TVP) as representing a traditional linear-evolution model, consistent with Fordist legacies and a "Television-First" strategy and mindset. The qualitative data highlight hierarchical and rigid management structures and persistent information silos, including communication barriers between production and distribution units, as well as the burdens of public procurement procedures, paperwork, and bureaucracy. Moreover, TVP's development in the platform era has occurred amid intense politicisation and the appropriation of Polish public media by political actors. This has contributed to defensive attitudes among employees, particularly in the post-election period, when staffing changes frequently reflect party affiliation. As a result, the brand's negative reputation within a highly polarised media environment illuminates the critical steps required for organisational renewal. This, in turn, offers potential value for strengthening public service media advocacy and informing scholarly responses to the urgent organisational adaptation required of PSM.

CLP06 Contemporary debates for Public Service Media governance and remits in Europe

PP 1096 Diverging digital futures: A comparative analysis of approaches to public service platforms in UK and German media policy

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Amid rising concerns about the influence of social media, misinformation and algorithmic systems on the European public sphere, the last decade has seen policymakers seek to update the regulatory framework governing public service media (PSM) for a digital age. However, despite their media systems facing similar challenges- technological disruption, economic pressures and political influence - European nation states have taken diverging policy approaches. This paper provides a comparative analysis of why and how policymakers in the UK and Germany have differed in their conceptualisations of public service media's role in a digital ecosystem since 2015. By analysing the divergent policy paths taken by the UK and Germany, this paper explores how different conceptions of public service media shape possible digital futures in Europe, aligning with the conference theme of *Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures.*

In the UK, reforms for public service media (such as the 2024 Media Act) have focused primarily on extending the audio-visual remit of PSM by securing smart-TV prominence and modernising distribution frameworks. Policy debates remained largely focused on the broadcast logic of content distribution, with limited attention to the broader potential of PSM as facilitators of civic participation or as convenors of digital public spaces. In contrast, Germany has gradually advanced a more expansive vision of PSM's digital role. Drawing from initiatives such as ZDF's participation in NewPublic's Public Spaces Incubator, which focuses on the development of online spaces for deliberation, and proposals for a European public service platform, German policymakers have adapted a conceptualization of PSM as foundational to a wider public digital ecosystem. A change to the Interstate Media Treaty enacted at the end of 2025 has broadened the public remit to encompass interactive, deliberative and participatory elements. The stated goal is to enable PSM organizations to provide "public open spaces" online, moving beyond a mere content distribution logic.

Using primary analysis of policy and regulatory statements and PSM strategy documents, this paper examines these contrasting conceptions to assess how the UK and Germany have imagined PSM's role in supporting a healthier digital environment. Analysing the policy discourse, organizational strategies of PSM, geopolitical dynamics and the emergence of legal and regulatory provisions, the paper traces how the policy debates in the two countries yielded these different results.

Against the backdrop of intensifying European debates on digital sovereignty, and as the UK prepares the BBC's next ten-year Charter, this paper examines public service media's potential as a core component of digital public infrastructure, while recognising its political, legal, financial, technological, and cultural constraints. By contextualising the choices pursued by policymakers, we reveal possibilities for alternative digital futures in Europe.

CLP07 Exercising Media Privilege, Protecting Media Freedom

PP 0680 Epistemic news plurality: A case for conditional regulation – A comparative analysis of France and Poland

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This paper develops a conceptual framework for analysing epistemic news plurality in contemporary, platform-driven hybrid news ecosystems. In these environments, professional news media no longer occupy a dominant position but compete for public attention with a wide range of "new epistemic authorities", including news influencers, commercial content creators, politicians, celebrities, ordinary users and an increasing volume of AI-generated content. In contexts of communicative

abundance—often characterised by misinformative, manipulative or trivial content—we argue that sustaining viable spaces for public deliberation has become a central democratic challenge.

Epistemic news plurality refers to the capacity of the media system to sustain public deliberation grounded in cognitive and normative standards, including information quality, source credibility and production transparency. While the epistemic public sphere is inherently heterogeneous, news media continue to play a distinctive role in linking professional standards and accountability with citizens' epistemic rights and democratic aspirations.

Building on established distinctions between Public Service Media (PSM), commercial news providers and the non-profit news sector, the paper proposes a set of criteria that are critical for sustaining epistemic news plurality under current conditions. These criteria are developed through a theoretical analysis and refined through empirical observations from France and Poland. They include professional standards, editorial independence, transparency (ownership, financial and production-related), representation of diversity, audience reach and visibility, participatory affordances, and the capacity for original, in-house news production. The analysis shows that these criteria take different institutional and practical forms across media sectors and national contexts.

Empirically, the paper draws on data collected within the MeDeMAP project to map the current state of epistemic news plurality in France and Poland. We assess how different news media providers meet the proposed criteria and examine the extent to which existing regulatory and policy instruments contribute to improving—or, in some cases, undermining—epistemic news plurality. These include national media pluralism regulation, the implementation of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), regulatory approaches to systemic information risks, and self- and co-regulatory mechanisms.

Our findings indicate that epistemic news plurality does not emerge automatically from media diversity alone, but depends on the interaction of specific structural, economic and regulatory conditions. On this basis, the paper advances recommendations for a conditional approach to epistemic news plurality regulation, in which public support, regulatory privileges or platform-related obligations are linked to demonstrable epistemic contributions by news providers.

CLP07 Exercising Media Privilege, Protecting Media Freedom

PP 0681 Constructing a privilege doctrine: Theorising and systematising journalism privileges in the European legal framework

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Media privileges have become increasingly prominent in media policy debates in Europe and are hailed as the new frontier for strengthening the resilience of news media and the quality and plurality of public debate. However, regulatory interventions that aim to bring journalism privileges to life in the online context, such as the EMFA's content moderation privilege or visibility privileges, have exposed significant tensions in respect of the equality of speech and the legitimacy of preferential protection.

This paper seeks to bring analytical clarity into this contested field by untangling the main contours, theoretical foundations and legal sources of the privileged protection of public interest journalism in Europe. It argues that the doctrine of privileged protection of journalism is grounded in a democracy-centred account of the free speech principle that not only permits but presupposes a hierarchical approach to free speech protection. According to a multi-tier free speech principle, different levels of protection are awarded to speech on the basis of their proximity to the free speech core, understood as the principle's central democratic function. As public interest journalism routinely engages in expressions that are instrumental to realizing this ultimate democratic purpose, its privileged protection is justified within such a framework.

If the underlying rationale for the privilege doctrine lies in the multi-tier free speech theory, this shapes how journalism privileges need to be conceptualised, circumscribed and applied. In particular, the paper develops three key parameters of the privilege doctrine, derived from such theoretial grounding: the privileged protection of public interest journalism is necessarily *instrumental*, *conditional* and *societal*, in contrast to the inherent, automatic and individual nature of the protection of ordinary speech.

Such privileged protection of public interest journalism is not only theoretically coherent but also has strong foundations in various areas of European law. The paper identifies three broad European privilege regimes: (1) constitutionally protected rights that afford journalism broader speech rights (compared to ordinary speech) or provide specific freedoms of which journalism is the primary beneficiary, (2) carveouts for journalism in different types of legislation that limit some aspects of communication or present risks of interference or censorship, (3) entitlements to journalism in various areas of law and policy where ordinarily applicable rules would not provide sufficiently supportive conditions for journalism. Through analysing these privilege regimes, the paper demonstrates that the privileged protection of public interest journalism is a shape-shifting and heterogeneous doctrine that has always evolved in response to the changing needs of a viable media ecosystem, while retaining its unified purpose and underlying democratic justifications. The normative framework developed in this paper, thus, offers a blueprint for repurposing the privilege doctrine for the digital society in a theoretically coherent and democratically grounded manner.

CLP07 Exercising Media Privilege, Protecting Media Freedom

PP 0682 Investigating media services' experience with preventing systemic risks to media freedom and pluralism from very large platforms

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Back in 2018 Helberger et al. referred to platform governance as a problem of many hands and called for arrangements for *cooperative responsibility* in which governments set parameters and users of all kinds are empowered to participate. The EU's 2022 Digital Services Act (DSA), arguably, sets out such an arrangement by establishing due diligence requirements for platforms and mandates transparency, flagging and redress mechanisms to empower users to engage in the prevention of harm (Wilman, 2024; Husovec, 2024). The cooperative responsibility arrangement implied by the DSA's innovative "systemic risk" management obligations on very large online platforms (VLOPs) and search engines is complex. It covers not only the circulation of illegal or harmful content, but also user behaviour and harm stemming from the service's own functionalities and design to individuals and society in very broad risk areas. As Broughton Micova and Calef (2023) pointed out, the expectations for platforms, users and various institutions relevant to the systemic risk areas, are not clear. It is in the mitigation of risks of "negative effects" for the exercise of fundamental rights "including freedom and pluralism of the media" (DSA Article 34) where this lack of clarity is particularly problematic due to the delicate balances involved.

This paper argues that the 2024 European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) has introduced some clarity in expectations by setting out how cooperative responsibility should work to address some harm from VLOP gatekeeping between media and audiences. The EMFA obliges VLOPs to provide mechanisms that allow media services to declare themselves as such, give media services advance warning and a chance to respond before their content is actioned, and prioritise their complaints (Article 18). It also sets out quality criteria for the media services and requires them be made public. VLOPs must provide tools and the media services must use them in good faith, while others monitor which media is getting this special treatment.

This paper will present findings from an investigation into how this is working and what it indicates is necessary for operationalising cooperative responsibility. After elaborating the allocation of responsibilities indicated in the EMFA and DSA, it will share the results of a survey of media service providers in Austria on their use of and experience with the declaration mechanisms provided by the VLOPs, and their experience with content moderation and redress. It will contribute new data on implementation of this regulatory mechanism where the EMFA and DSA interact to mitigate harm to media freedom and pluralism. Advancing debates about responsibility in platform governance, it raises questions about the roles of information disparities, distinctions among users (e.g. media service providers, platform users/audiences), and the potential for collaboration.

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CLP08 Governance of Data and Privacy

PP 0778 Re-infrastructuring the digital cultural economy: EU data governance and the institutional turn of WEB3

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Debates on Web3 and blockchain in media and communication research have largely oscillated between technological utopianism and critical rejection. In the cultural and creative industries, these debates intensified after the speculative boom of crypto assets and NFTs exposed renewed opacity, inequality, and governance failures. In Europe, however, this crisis coincided with a distinctive policy moment. The emergence of the Data Governance Act (DGA), the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI), and related data-sovereignty and platform-governance initiatives created a regulatory environment in which decentralisation was no longer framed as a challenge to governance, but as a potential instrument of it. This paper, based on a book the authors are currently writing, starts from the observation that decentralisation did not fail because it was too radical, but because it was insufficiently institutionalised. The central question is therefore how decentralised technologies are reconfigured when they encounter European communication law, cultural policy, and public-value traditions.

The paper draws on a plural theory of value that distinguishes four interacting imaginaries – price, labour, institutional coordination, and public good – and treats digital infrastructures as the sites where these imaginaries first enter dialogue, then stabilise, and are governed. Combining institutional and evolutionary political economy, infrastructure studies,

and public-value theory, blockchain is conceptualised not as a market technology but as a governance infrastructure. Decentralisation is approached as a design variable shaped by regulation, standards, and institutional context rather than as an ideology of disintermediation. This leads to the core analytical concept of *re-infrastructuring*: a process through which technological promises are translated into institutional arrangements via interoperability frameworks, metadata standards, legal compliance mechanisms, and practices of maintenance and care. Legitimacy is produced not by removing intermediaries, but by redesigning mediation.

Empirically, the paper is based on a series of qualitative research projects across European audiovisual and cultural sectors. The material includes comparative case studies of decentralised media and rights-data initiatives; interviews with entrepreneurs, engineers, policymakers, and cultural institutions; and participatory observation within EU-funded research and innovation consortia. The cases examined include peer-to-peer media experiments, public-service copyright registries aligned with national digital-government systems, and interoperable licence-ledger solutions connecting producers, collecting societies, and public broadcasters. Rather than treating these as isolated innovations, the paper analyses them as emerging institutional forms: data intermediaries, shared registries, and standards-based coordination layers.

The paper makes three contributions to communication law and policy research. First, it provides empirically grounded insight into the concrete institutions and infrastructures emerging at the intersection of Web3 and European regulation. Second, it shows that Europe's creative industries function as laboratories of institutional learning, where decentralisation is translated into public-value-oriented infrastructures rather than disruptive markets. Third, it advances a normative but non-utopian account of digital governance: decentralisation acquires legitimacy only when it learns from the institutions it initially sought to escape. By reframing Web3 as re-infrastructuring rather than disruption, the paper offers a grounded perspective on how European communication policy can shape digital futures around coordination, trust, and democratic public value.

CLP08 Governance of Data and Privacy

PP 0779 Privacy as a collective problem: Evidence from a representative survey experiment on privacy externalities

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Privacy is one of the central challenges in digital societies characterized by pervasive data generation, collection, and processing. Public, regulatory, and scholarly discussions of privacy have largely focused on how individuals can protect their personal information, typically framing privacy as an individual right, thereby obscuring the collective nature of privacy and the unintended effects of data disclosure on others who are not directly involved in the data transaction. Such unintended effects, referred to as "privacy externalities" (Acquisti, 2010; de Brouwer, 2020; MacCarthy, 2011), arise when the data practices of individuals, companies, or governments inadvertently compromise the privacy of uninvolved third parties. Recognizing these dynamics highlights the increasingly interdependent and collective nature of privacy and raises three key questions: (1) how aware people are of privacy externalities, (2) who should be held responsible, and (3) who should internalize their costs.

To address these questions, we conducted a representative online survey of 1,210 internet users aged 16 and above in [*blinded for review*] with an integrated 3 × 2 × 3 × 3 mixed-design vignette experiment. Awareness of privacy externalities was measured using nine true-or-false statements covering different forms of privacy externalities. In addition, a semantic differential scale with nine opposing adjective pairs (e.g., individual–collective) assessed whether respondents viewed the protection of privacy primarily as an individual or a societal issue. Responsibility attribution and support for internalizing privacy externalities were examined through vignettes depicting three different contexts in which a data-sharing act negatively affected an uninvolved third party (within-subjects factor). Between-subjects factors included personal gain from data sharing (two levels), informed consent (three levels), and severity of consequences (three levels), yielding 54 unique scenarios. Participants were stratified by age and randomly assigned to one of 18 experimental conditions, each comprising three vignettes with the same factorial combination. After each vignette, respondents evaluated the degree of responsibility attributed to the involved actors and indicated their support for four types of mitigation measures (information provision, protective actions, self-restraint, and liability) framed as obligations for themselves, the general public, companies, and the government.

The results show that awareness of privacy externalities is generally low. Responsibility judgments are strongly context-dependent and shaped by cues such as perceived controllability, the level of informed consent, and whether the data-sharing individual personally benefited. Respondents express broad support for internalizing the costs of privacy externalities, particularly for companies with data-driven business models, which are expected to provide clearer information, implement effective safeguards, and refrain from practices likely to generate externalities. Willingness to adjust one's own data-sharing behavior is lower overall but increases with the perceived severity of the externality and among individuals with more socially oriented values.

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CLP08 Governance of Data and Privacy

PP 0780 Social media platforms as informal networked data ecosystems: An expert review of Kenya's data protection regime

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In Kenya, social media platforms function as central hubs for commerce, enabling transactions between consumers, small and medium enterprises, mobile money services, and delivery riders. Personal data generated during these transactions circulates across multiple actors who operate largely unregistered and weakly governed, producing an informal networked data ecosystem. This paper examines: How does the Kenya Data Protection Act regulate data flows in Kenya's informal social media commerce? What enforcement gaps emerge when data controllers remain unregistered and unidentifiable? How do institutional limitations affect enforcement in decentralised data flows? No comprehensive study has explored how data protection frameworks modelled for formal economies function when applied to informal networked ecosystems. This study fills this gap. Drawing on theories of regulatory transplantation and state legibility, this study examines how GDPR-inspired frameworks encounter visibility challenges when applied to informal networked ecosystems. Based on semi-structured interviews with thirty-five experts including data protection officers, regulators, legal practitioners, technologists, and consumer rights advocates. Early findings show fundamental incommensurability between the regulatory framework and the ecosystem it attempts to govern, manifesting through three interconnected gaps. Registration requirements based on revenue and employee counts exempt informal actors processing personal and sensitive data. Enforcement depends on consumer complaints from an "enlightened minority" while most perceive data collection as inherent to platforms. In networked transactions, where social media platforms connect consumers and SMEs who share data with delivery riders, regulators cannot trace flows beyond initial controllers. These structural gaps compound institutional constraints. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner operates with limited staff, urban-only presence, and no prosecutorial powers, resulting in unpaid fines and enforcement limited to individual cases surfaced through complaints while most informal actors remain ungoverned. This study contributes theoretical understanding of how transplanted data protection frameworks fail to achieve regulatory visibility in informal data economies that differ from the formal economies they were designed to govern.

Keywords

data protection, Kenya, social media commerce, informal economy, regulatory enforcement, platform governance, regulatory transplantation, state legibility

CLP08 Governance of Data and Privacy

PP 0781 Negotiating transparency and privacy under digital regulation: Evidence from mandatory IP location disclosure on a Chinese social media platform

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Digital transparency measures have become an increasingly prominent instrument of communication regulation, often justified as means to enhance accountability, curb misinformation, and stabilize online discourse. Such measures are part of broader shifts toward platform-centred digital governance, where regulatory goals are increasingly implemented through interface-level design and disclosure requirements. Yet far less is known about how such measures operate in practice once they are translated into mandatory platform rules, nor about how users experience and respond to the forms of visibility these interventions produce in everyday platform use. This study examines how social media users navigate transparency, privacy, and participation in response to mandatory IP location disclosure, a regulatory intervention that requires platforms to display coarse-grained geographic labels (e.g., province- or country-level) alongside user-generated content.

Empirically, the study focuses on Zhihu, a major Chinese question-and-answer platform characterized by relatively in-depth and deliberative public discussion. Drawing on web-scraped data comprising 373 policy-related questions and 16,552 user responses posted after the implementation of IP location disclosure, the study adopts a mixed computational approach. User sentiment is analyzed using a fine-tuned BERT-based classification model, while user engagement is operationalized through a composite metric capturing activity, visibility, and social recognition on the platform. In addition, BERT-based topic modeling is employed to identify dominant themes structuring public discourse around the policy.

The findings show that overall sentiment toward IP location disclosure is predominantly neutral to mildly negative, indicating ambivalence rather than outright rejection. User discussions repeatedly foreground concerns about privacy erosion, digital surveillance, and the amplification of regional identities and stereotypes, suggesting that IP location disclosure is experienced as a socially consequential form of enforced visibility rather than a purely technical feature. Importantly, responses to the policy vary systematically across levels of user engagement. Highly engaged users demonstrate greater capacity to articulate polarized and nuanced positions, actively reflecting on perceived trade-offs between regulatory transparency, accountability, and personal risk. By contrast, less engaged users are more likely to express skepticism, resignation, or disengagement, pointing to uneven capacities and willingness to participate under conditions of mandatory disclosure.

By linking regulatory intervention, platform-level implementation, and differentiated user responses, this study contributes to research on platform governance and the regulatory dimensions of communication, offering a globally relevant case of digital policy implementation and its societal consequences. It demonstrates how transparency policies may generate unintended participatory consequences, reinforcing inequalities in voice and visibility rather than uniformly fostering accountability. Beyond the Chinese context, the findings offer insights into broader debates on how digital regulation reshapes participation, rights, and public expression in platform-mediated communication environments.

CLP08 Governance of Data and Privacy

PP 0782 Audiovisual policy and governance in the European Union: The 'Spain Audiovisual Hub' initiative as a case of member state implementation

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Recent years have witnessed an intensified transformation of the European audiovisual media landscape, driven by platformisation, technological change, and growing geopolitical pressures (Chalaby, 2025). The adoption of major regulatory instruments—such as the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA)—reflects a renewed European commitment to safeguarding media plurality, regulatory independence, and democratic values in an increasingly digital and platform-dominated environment (Ranaivoson, Raats & Broughton-Micova, 2023). Alongside these regulatory developments, the European Union has mobilised unprecedented financial resources through the post-COVID Recovery and Resilience Facility, opening new avenues for media policy intervention based on public investment and industrial support.

Within this context, Spain constitutes a particularly distinctive case. As one of the main beneficiaries of EU recovery funds, it stands out for having allocated a substantial share of these resources to the audiovisual sector. The 'Spain Audiovisual Hub' is a Government of Spain initiative (2021–2025), which aims to position the country as an international hub for audiovisual production, investment, and business. The initiative represents a singular national interpretation of European audiovisual policy priorities, as it foregrounds the industrial dimension of media policy at a time when EU-level initiatives have emphasized digital regulation, platform accountability, and media freedom (Vlassis, 2023). This makes the Spanish case particularly suitable for examining how national policy choices can complement, reinterpret, or rebalance broader European audiovisual objectives.

This paper analyses the 'Spain Audiovisual Hub' as a national media policy case study, examining how European audiovisual policy objectives are translated into concrete regulatory, institutional, and financial instruments at the Member State level. The theoretical framework is grounded in the conceptualisation of audiovisual policy as a dynamic balance between regulatory intervention, market dynamics, and public interest objectives. It also engages with research on audiovisual industries and diversity in the digital era (Albornoz & García Leiva, 2019). In addition, the analysis draws on scholarship addressing platform policies and competition in European media markets, which highlights the growing interdependence between audiovisual regulation, platform governance, and public interest considerations (Evens, Donders & Afilipoaie, 2020). This perspective is particularly relevant for assessing the 'Spain Audiovisual Hub', as the initiative operates at the intersection of audiovisual production, global platforms, and national market incentives, raising questions about the long-term implications of industrial support in platform-centred ecosystems.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative case-study approach (Broughton-Micova, 2019) based on the systematic analysis of EU and national policy documents, regulatory texts, institutional reports, and publicly available budgetary data related to the Hub. These materials are examined to assess policy rationales, governance arrangements, and regulatory alignment, with particular interest in the interaction between audiovisual regulation, platform dynamics, and public investment strategies.

The analysis focuses on three dimensions: coherence with EU audiovisual frameworks, institutional coordination of industrial and policy objectives, and implications for media plurality and cultural diversity. It concludes that the Spanish case offers valuable insights into how a Member State can develop policy singularities within a shared European media policy framework. It also provides a reference for comparative analysis across the EU internal market.

CLP09 Comparative Approaches to Address Platform Practices

PP 0886 Handling offensive content on social media: Determinants of reporting behavior and cross-country differences in satisfaction with reporting mechanisms across the EU

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Social media platforms accelerate the spread of opinions to wide audiences and thereby amplify not only positive but also hostile forms of communication. While the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA) obliges platforms to address unlawful offensive content, its effectiveness largely depends on users' ability to report such content. Since reporting mechanisms are often complex and require substantial digital literacy (Festl, 2021), and levels of digital literacy vary considerably across EU member states (Eurostat, 2021), the impact of the DSA is likely to differ across countries.

Thus, it remains unclear how effective the introduced law will be in practice across different national contexts. Against this background, our first research question asks, which factors (digital literacy, social media usage and repeated exposure to offensive content) influence reporting behavior in an EU cross-country comparison (RQ1).

Furthermore, prior experiences of personally affected users with existing platform reporting procedures may provide important insights into the practical applicability of regulatory measures such as the DSA. Accordingly, the second research question examines, reporting users' satisfaction with platform reporting mechanisms in a cross-country comparison (RQ2).

We address these issues through a secondary analysis of online survey data from five EU member states – Austria, France, Finland, Italy, and Spain ($N = 6753$) – representing diverse usage profiles (Gomes & Dias, 2025), conducted between November 2022 and January 2023. The analysis focuses on respondents who reported being personally insulted at least once ($N = 1173$). Digital literacy was measured using a self-assessment instrument developed by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre; for the purposes of this study, we focus on 11 items related to privacy and security in digital environments such as social media. Social media usage was measured in a 7-point Likert scale, the exposure to offensive content was measured binary, differentiating between respondents who had been insulted once and those who had experienced insults multiple times. Reporting behavior was measured binary differentiating between respondents who had reported offensive content on the platform at least once and those who had never done so. Satisfaction with the reporting procedures on the platform was measured using a 4-point scale (1 = very satisfied, 4 = not at all satisfied). To answer the first research question, we conducted binary logistic regressions for each country, controlling for gender, age and education. Prior to running the regressions, we ensured that no multicollinearity was present.

The findings reveal substantial cross-national differences in reporting offensive content. Reporting behavior is generally higher in Southern European countries and is primarily associated with digital literacy, although the relevant predictors vary by country. Satisfaction with reporting mechanisms also differs across countries but remains moderate overall, indicating that while reporting procedures function to some extent, their improvement could enhance reporting rates across Europe.

At the conference, we will discuss conceptual and applied implications of these findings.

CLP09 Comparative Approaches to Address Platform Practices

PP 0887 Effects of age verification legislation in US-states on the consumption of online-pornography by under 18s: An interrupted time-series analysis using behavioural data

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In the 1990s, attempts in the US to criminalize the publication of 'indecent', 'offensive', or 'harmful' internet content that could be accessed by minors were struck down on free-speech grounds. Since those failed federal Acts, the availability of online pornography has increased, prompting, since 2023, a wave of legislation by individual US-states. By the end of 2025, 26 states—from Alabama to Wyoming—had legislation in force that required commercial websites containing at least 33.3% pornographic content to use age verification (AV) methods to ensure users were at least 18 years old.

Existing studies (Lang et al. 2025, Spencer 2025, Guo and Peng 2025) have attempted to investigate the effects of such legislation by analysing changes—at the state level—in the volume of Google searches for terms such as "Pornhub" and "Xvideos". Although the studies found changes in search patterns, they could not distinguish between searches by under 18s and those 18+. Furthermore, Googling the name of a pornographic website does not necessarily mean the searcher will subsequently visit it. Conversely, not all visits are via search and there are thousands of other pornographic websites.

To overcome these limitations, our study uses behavioural data from a large (N = 100,000+) online panel of US internet users who agreed to have their internet consumption tracked via software installed on their desktop computers. Because the demographics of the panel members are known, we could distinguish between under-18s and adults and between

those living in states with and without age verification legislation (AVL). Furthermore, when recording panelists' internet consumption, the tracking software assigns usage to panelists according to the locations of their home desktops—even if they are using a VPN to spoof their location.

Using 49 months' of data, our study is a quasi-experiment using an interrupted time series design. To assess the efficacy of AVL, we analyse pre- and post-intervention trends in the consumption of hundreds of commercial pornographic websites by 13–17-year-olds using a variety of measures. These include the proportion of adolescents visiting such sites (% reach) as well as metrics (such visit frequency and the numbers of minutes and pages per visit) that move beyond exposure to capture the level of attention being paid.

To control for threats to validity, we compare trends in the behaviour of users living in states with AVL with the behaviour of users living in states without. As recommended by Shadish et al. (2002), to further control for validity threats, we also compare the consumption of pornographic websites with the consumption of other websites not effected by AVL.

This study is, we believe, the first to analyse the effects of age verification legislation in US-states on the consumption of online-pornography using direct measurement (rather than a proxy variable) and also the first to investigate the effects on the behaviour of the age group AVL is designed to regulate.

CLP09 Comparative Approaches to Address Platform Practices

PP 0888 New challenges, traditional policy values? Nordic-Baltic policy and regulatory approaches to algorithmic content recommendation systems

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Algorithmic content recommendation (ACR) systems are central to the business logic of global online platforms, shaping how information is selected, filtered, and personalized (Stray et al., 2024). These systems pose novel political, societal, and economic challenges (Helberger, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2019), raising acute regulatory dilemmas in Nordic and Baltic small states, where historically strong public interest media policies must respond to algorithmic systems developed and controlled by global, market-oriented platforms. This study examines *which public interest values guide media policy and regulatory responses to ACR in Nordic and Baltic countries*. Examining these values is essential for clarifying how Nordic and Baltic communication policy adapt to the new challenges posed by ACR. Building on Van Cuilenburg and McQuail's (2003) notion of shifting communications policy paradigms (understood as changing balance of political, social, and economic values that define the public interest) and literature on algorithmic governance and platform regulation (e.g., Helberger et al., 2018; Napoli, 2015; Trappel et al. 2023), the study investigates how Nordic–Baltic regulators navigate tensions between traditional media policy values on the one hand and the challenges created by algorithmic content recommendation systems on the other.

The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 14 media regulators and communication policy makers from five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and three Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania), conducted from April 2025 to June 2025. Analytically, we distinguish between political welfare, social welfare and economic welfare as categories of general public interest objectives (Van Cuilenburg and McQuail, 2003). We identify which values under these categories are invoked when the interviewees identify risks created by ACR and when they propose responses. Finally, we analyze how these values reflect or diverge from Nordic–Baltic media policy traditions (Kõuts-Klemm et al., 2022; Syvertsen et al., 2014) and characteristics of small states' media policy (Balčytienė, 2009; Puppis, 2009).

Under *political welfare*, values of media pluralism, and accountability were emphasized and often contrasted with freedom of expression. These values were mainly invoked to ensure that individuals are exposed to diverse and accurate news content through ACR, rather than guaranteeing the availability of diverse content and different channels. The *social welfare* values inclusion, trust, and protection of vulnerable audiences were also prominent. *Economic welfare* values, in particular market fairness, competition, and limiting platform dominance were secondary to political and social objectives.

The prioritization of the quality and diversity of information as experienced by individual users, rather than merely guaranteeing access or structural plurality suggests that Nordic–Baltic policymakers are adapting long-standing media policy commitments to address the personalized news consumption due to ACR. The relatively low emphasis on economic welfare values is notable, given the small-state context. Together, these findings indicate that traditional policy values remain central but are being reinterpreted in practice to navigate the new challenges posed by algorithmic content recommendation systems.

CLP09 Comparative Approaches to Address Platform Practices

PP 0889 Capturing the grey zones: The regulation of the cultural production of Danish influencers

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Influencers are specific content creators. They primarily work and construct ecosystems via digital platforms such as Twitch, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, X and YouTube. They are interested in reach, impact and contact with other platform users to construct and sustain their "brand"; and they wish to appear authentic to their audiences (Abidin 2015; Duffy 2020; Bishop 2025). Being an influencer is also a profession in the sense that influencers generate income; by engaging in partnerships with platforms and their ad programmes; by promoting products in their content production; by making commercial sponsorships with companies; and by channelling their influencer persona to other contexts, such as reality shows, in productions with established media companies and PSBs, by making and selling their own products, etc. Influencers are therefore not only invested in the ecosystem of platforms but also construct an ecosystem around their cultural productions and persona, which includes companies, brands, media organisations, influencer agencies and platforms (Hudders et al. 2021; Hund 2023).

In terms of governance, influencers are regulated *by* platforms, for instance in managing audience relationships and visibility (Baym 2018; Cotter 2019), content moderation (Gillespie 2018; Gorwa et al. 2020) and the platforms' business models (van Doorn 2017). However, the platforms that influencers use are also subject to regulation and governance (DeNardis & Hackl 2015; Gorwa 2024; Flew 2021), manifested in the EU with regulatory frameworks such as the AVMS directive, the DSA, the DMA, the GDPR and the AI act. These supranational frameworks are implemented in different nation states, which adds to this complex nexus between influencers, platforms and national contexts. The context of this paper is the Nordic digital welfare state (Andreassen et al. 2021; Kaun & Löfgren 2024; Valtysson & Jørgensen 2025), more specifically, Denmark and Danish influencers.

In regulatory terms, the complexity between platform regulation, the influencer as a cultural producer and national contexts creates grey zones (van Dijck et al. 2018; Poell et al. 2022) that cut across the different policy fields (digital markets, digital services, privacy and data protection, audiovisual content, AI), the platforms' policies, community guidelines and terms of service, and national regulation. The aim of this paper is to inspect the regulatory challenges of placing and responding to the content creation of popular Danish influencers, thereby inspecting further how the regulatory grey zones manifest in the content production of prominent Danish influencers. We will use the popular influencers Jas and Mika, as critical case study (Flyvbjerg 2006) and conduct a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000; Hsieh & Shannon 2005) of their platform ecosystem over three months. Jas and Mika produce content primarily aimed at children and youth and by analysing their larger platform ecosystem, it is our aim to use their content productions to exemplify regulatory grey zones, which are prevalent in the protective framework surrounding minors. We thus aim to critically engage with current platform regulation, and how EU regulatory frameworks are implemented in a Danish context.

CLP09 Comparative Approaches to Address Platform Practices

PP 0890 The very large online platforms and very large online search engines fail to fulfill their transparency obligations for advertising repositories under Article 39 of the EU Digital Service Act

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Article 39 of EU Digital Service Act (DSA) mandates designated Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs) to provide and maintain public advertising repositories. These repositories are intended to facilitate the monitoring of ad content and granular delivery metadata. The regulation requirements for these repositories can be categorized into four layers: functional requirements (public availability, searchability, multi-criteria filters and API); ad detail disclosures (content, product/brand, subject matter, advertisers and payers, and display period); target and delivery (targeting criteria, exclusions, impressions and reach); and documentation of non-compliant ad processing.

This study examines the implementation of these regulations by empirically auditing repositories using the keyword "Brawl Stars" (or its parent company Supercell Oy where applicable), a widely promoted video game in the EU, supplemented by additional case-specific queries.

Preliminary results show that 17 of the 25 designated VLOPs and VLOSEs established a publicly accessible and searchable advertising repository. These services generally performed well on baseline functional requirements, meeting most of the DSA's minimum expectations. However, about half of them failed to disclose the ad payer, and platforms such as Apple App Store and Booking.com display ambiguity in defining and revealing the "advertiser", thereby undermining clear attribution.

Compliance is weakest regarding the target and delivery data. For 11 of the 17 active repositories, platforms listed only parameter names rather than criteria or values used for targeting and exclusions. Impressions were categorized into predefined buckets across 11 repositories, providing only vague numerical ranges that render quantitative monitoring

ineffective. Furthermore, although more than half of the repositories provided the reach data disaggregated by countries or regions, only 2 of them provided additional reach numbers based on the target criteria required by Article 39.

In terms of the illegal or non-compliant ads, 13 platforms removed such ads without disclosure. Among the remainder, only Temu correctly provided both the removal reasons and the procedural details, while Apple App Store provided a removed ads library without specific reasons. AliExpress and Snapchat provided disclosures identical to active ads, failing to meet the DSA's transparency standards.

Additionally, although the DSA is an EU obligation, the platforms and search engines often extend to global markets, showing records for countries and regions like the UK, Singapore and Taiwan (China). This study offers practical insights for platforms and search engines to improve the design of advertising repositories and provides reference for regulators and other stakeholders responsible for monitoring DSA compliance.

CLP10 Media Ownership and Pluralistic Markets

PP 0992 Media ownership structures of news-related VLOP accounts in the EU: Differences in transparency between traditional media and content creators

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The use of digital platforms for news keeps growing. Especially *Very Large Online Platforms* (VLOPs) change how people find and access content and attain information, influencing the news industry and journalistic practices as a whole (Mazzoli & Tambini, 2020). This has led to debates on how to safeguard access and the promotion of public interest content on those platforms. A possible dimension of this could be increasing transparency in ownership structures of these accounts, just as the current EU media policy EMFA is pursuing regarding traditional media, as such transparency supports democratic systems by fostering accountability (Craufurd Smith et al., 2021).

Media ownership and its structures have already been examined from various perspectives, primarly focusing on how they are shaped by different kinds of ultimate owners and decision-makers (Sjøvaag & Ohlsson, 2019). However, for this it is essential that ownership structures are known. With digital platforms, which are used by traditional media and news content creators alike, these established kinds of structures are possibly challenged, as it might be unclear who is behind online accounts to which historically evolved media laws and standards do not necessarily apply. Not only does this call for an investigation into the transparency of the ownership structures of VLOP accounts in general, it also creates the need of examining possible differences between accounts directly linked to traditional media and those that are not – something this paper seeks to address.

This paper conducts such an analysis based on the 2025 scores of risk assessments of transparency in media ownership by the Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EurOMo). Relevant indicators are transparency of *direct* and *beneficial owners*, naming of all *natural-person shareholders* and transparency of *legal ownership form* (Euromedia Ownership Monitor, 2025). For each indicator, the monitor has scored the single outlets of its sample, which are opinion-shaping news producers across sectors (print, broadcast, website and VLOP account). 188 VLOP accounts are included, 148 related to traditional media and 40 to content creators.

Results show that transparency regarding VLOP accounts in general is high in most EU countries. This is particularly true for direct owners and legal ownership forms. Transparency tends to be lower for natural persons and beneficial owners. Differences between the transparency of structures for VLOP accounts of traditional media and those of content creators are minimal. In cases where there are significant differences, they tend to relate to individual countries. The findings are crucial for further discussions as they provide valuable insights into the current status of accounts playing a media-like role, especially since the EMFA has introduced higher transparency requirements for the first time.

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CLP10 Media Ownership and Pluralistic Markets

PP 0993 Between legal demands and messy data: Building exhaustive media ownership chains with triangulation and uncertainty in the Euromedia Ownership Monitor

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European media ownership transparency is increasingly framed as a governance tool to safeguard pluralism, deter undue influence, and enable accountability (Craufurd Smith, Klimkiewicz, & Ostling, 2021 ; Tomaz, 2024). Yet, despite strengthened EU-level expectations – from the Anti Money-Laundering Directive framework (AMLD) to disclosure duties introduced by the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) – establishing who owns and controls media outlets in practice remains methodologically difficult, especially in cross-border cases. This presentation reflects on challenges emerging from the data collection of the Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EurOMo), a research infrastructure designed to provide granular information on EU media ownership relations and other stakeholders in relevant control functions.

EurOMo adopts an exhaustive chain approach: starting from an outlet's legally responsible publisher (often identifiable via imprint or privacy-policy disclosures), it reconstructs successive layers of legal shareholdings until the beneficial owner, understood as the natural person(s) with ultimate control. In addition to shareholders, EurOMo tracks senior managing officials, persons with editorial responsibility, board members and chairs (notably for entities without clear shareholders), and well-documented forms of influence (e.g., parties, churches, interest groups). Data are triangulated across heterogeneous, publicly-available sources: outlet self-disclosures; annual reports and corporate communications; national business and beneficial ownership registries mandated under the AMLD; commercial corporate databases; and investigative journalism and official public documents. Collected information is structured in a relational format aligned with the Beneficial Ownership Data Standard (BODS).

From this workflow, EurOMo surfaces a set of recurring methodological challenges, and this paper focuses on five of them. First, registry fragmentation and uneven implementation across Member States produces incomplete, divergent, and difficult-to-compare records, turning cross-border verification into manual work (e.g., Czech Media Invest). Second, opaque legal forms, such as foundations and trusts, often lack clear ownership and provide limited insight into decision-making power (e.g., Moser Holding in AT); some jurisdictions list legal entities as board members rather than natural persons (e.g., NL). Third, trade-offs between precision and clarity arise when exhaustive mapping leads to overwhelming complexity, risking loss of the 'big picture' of control and complicating the construction of coherent media groups (e.g., Bolloré group in FR). Fourth, investment funds pose categorisation problems: they can be seen as both legal entities and assets; in addition, they may hold recursive stakes, creating circular ownership patterns and obscuring actual ownership and influence (e.g., Blackrock and Vanguard). Finally, relational influence can be decisive even in EU countries and documenting networks of relations or informal affiliations remains challenging even with mature standards such as BODS; systematic formalisation requires stretching current schemas, threatening standardisation.

The presentation concludes with implications for aligning AMLD/EMFA transparency ambitions with verifiable, interoperable ownership data, and with design principles for documenting uncertainty while preserving analytical clarity about control.

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CLP10 Media Ownership and Pluralistic Markets

PP 0994 What is behind Spanish newsrooms? Mapping the ownership and transparency gaps in a concentrated and financialized media landscape

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In the current scenario, characterized by dwindling levels of citizens' trust in journalism and the growing impact of news avoidance, concerns about media accountability (Kreutler et al., 2024) are all the greater. Aligning with institutional demands for transparency (EMFA, 2024; European Commission, 2020), citizens would like "fuller disclosure of sources, and better transparency over funding and conflicts of interest" (Newman et al., 2025, p. 26). In addition to explaining editorial practices, disseminating information about media ownership structures and financial results (Trappel, 2024) is increasingly considered an important step towards bolstering democratic participation (Craufurd Smith et al., 2021) and "safeguarding and promoting media pluralism" (Tomaz, 2024, p. 509).

This paper contributes to the ongoing debates on media transparency by presenting the findings of research conducted by the Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EurOMo) project team on the Spanish context between 2022 and 2025. The study has been guided by the following questions: What are the predominant ownership structures and control relations in the most important news outlets in Spain? (RQ1); What is the level of transparency exhibited by their websites? (RQ2). A cross-section of Spanish outlets (N = 24), including most consumed television channels, radio stations, print and online newspapers and social media news accounts was selected for the analysis. Following the EurOMo methodological approach (Tomaz, 2024), data was collected from public sources, including companies' websites and reports, press releases and ownership registers such as the National Securities Market Commission (CNMV) and the National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC). A relational database comprising of 54 categories was employed to register data from all persons in the ownership chain, all the entities with direct or indirect shareholding in the sampled outlets and all ownership relations.

Consistent with previous research (Artero-Muñoz et al., 2021; Parrilla-Guix et al., 2025), the analysis reveals a concentrated and increasingly financialized media ecosystem characterized by limited transparency. In institutional terms, ownership is predominantly corporate (RQ1). 13 of the 24 outlets exhibit complex or very complex ownership structures, defined as more than two layers between the publisher and the ultimate beneficiaries. Ownership is also highly internationalized: 64 of 130 legal owners (49.2%) are based outside Spain. The financial nature of owners is salient, as more than half of legal owners are financial actors (notably trusts, banks, asset-management funds) or companies in insurance and real estate businesses. Transparency is very limited, particularly regarding financing and ultimate beneficial ownership: only public broadcasters (RTVE and 3Cat) and eldiario.es provide this information in full (RQ2). Insights into newsroom composition diverge between organisations. Financial statements of owning entities are not widespread across the sample while information on subsidies and revenue from public advertising is unavailable in most cases. Findings reveal a clear mismatch between growing institutional demands for transparency and the persistent opacity of ownership and financing structures in the Spanish media system.

While acknowledging limitations and potential areas for future inquiry, the analysis can help inform media representatives and policymakers and stimulate the discussion on the challenges and opportunities for strengthening media accountability in Europe and beyond.

CLP10 Media Ownership and Pluralistic Markets

PP 0995 Access denied: Paywalls, information inequality, and the economics of quality journalism

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The very mechanism that promises to safeguard journalism's future also undermines its accessibility, fragmenting the public into informational haves and have-nots. In this paper, we examine the paradox of paywalls through an interdisciplinary lens, with a view toward proactive media policy and governance capable of mitigating the risks of digital informational inequalities, particularly those rooted in economic and educational inequalities and contributing to generational divides. Although paywalls are a legitimate revenue stream for commercial online media, they cannot be regarded as neutral tools of financial sustainability; rather, they should be understood as institutional mechanisms with far-reaching implications for democracy and social cohesion. This is especially relevant in today's media environment, where an abundance of free online content exists, but its accuracy and quality are increasingly questionable. When citizens are exposed to vastly different levels of information- some accessing rigorous reporting, while others rely on freely available but often unreliable online alternatives- the shared foundation on which democratic deliberation depends begins to erode.

From a media studies perspective, journalism's normative function lies in its contribution to democratic deliberation (Christians et al., 2009; Stromback, 2005). The democratic theory of journalism holds that citizens require access to trustworthy and diverse information to make collective decisions, hold power to account, and participate effectively in public life (Geiss, 2023). Paywalls pose a challenge to this ideal by enclosing what is normatively a public good within commercial logics of scarcity (UNESCO, 2022). From an economics perspective, information goods differ from physical commodities. They are costly to produce but cheap to distribute, which makes them prone to under provision in purely market-based systems (Stigler, 1961; Varian, 1995). Paywalls reintroduce scarcity where none naturally exists, creating asymmetries between those who can pay for quality news and those who cannot. Bringing these perspectives together allows us to examine how structural market dynamics and normative democratic expectations collide in the digital news ecosystem.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it situates paywalls within the broader literature on digital inequalities (DiMaggio et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2015; Imran, 2022), showing how access to journalism is not only a question of consumer behaviour but also a matter of structural distribution. Second, it engages with empirical evidence on media economics and audience studies, highlighting striking differences across countries and socio-economic groups in willingness to pay for news. Third, the paper offers a conceptual synthesis by bridging normative theories of journalism with the economics of information, thus contributing to interdisciplinary debates at the intersection of communication studies, political science, and economics. In doing so, it reframes paywalls not as isolated market instruments but as systemic forces that shape today's information spaces and individuals news diets, both foundational for democracy. Against this background,

the paper concludes by proposing new avenues for media policy that are more attuned to contemporary realities and that build on a system of subsidies, public service media, and media literacy initiatives to address the growing digital divides.

Keywords

paywall; paywall paradox; informational inequalities; media economics; media policy

CLP10 Media Ownership and Pluralistic Markets

PP 0996 A bouquet of ideas for the way forward? State support for (private) media in Germany

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The circumstances for media organizations concerned with the provision of public service journalism remain dire, the challenges plentiful. German news publishers continue to face decreasing advertising revenues. While spending for digital advertising increases, news publishers don't benefit.

This affects publishers on local and hyperlocal levels with limited potential and total audiences even more, while their contribution to public sphere and participation, and thus democracy, remains fundamental. Consequently, discussions about alternative modes of financing public interest journalism through media subsidies gain traction.

This project's research agenda is to identify media subsidy programs implemented by state and state adjacent actors in Germany. State actors refer to governmental bodies, i.e. ministries or state chancelleries, state adjacent actors refer to public-law institutions, i.e. non-governmental bodies assigned with specific tasks by law such as the Media Authorities of the German states.

Media subsidies are a well-established media policy tool since at least the 1960s in a substantial number of European countries. Subsidies come in direct and indirect forms, allocated generally or specifically to beneficiaries. For the longest time, Germany employs a rather hesitant approach to media policy and more specifically media subsidies for private media.

Based on the horrific historic experiences and designed by the Allies in the post-war setting, Germany's media policy is governed by its individual states rather than the federal government both for majority the Public Service Media and private media. In accordance with the challenges outlined in the introduction (e.g. declining circulation, reallocation of advertising funds), the project focuses on private media rather than PSM who face a different set of challenges.

By means of document analysis of written laws, statutes, respective institution's websites and press releases, media subsidy programs on the federal and state level are systematically identified. This paints a fully comprehensive picture of currently implemented media subsidies in Germany – an overview that is missing in literature so far.

Prior research into media subsidies primarily comes in comparative cross-country designs describing subsidies programs for particular media types, i.e. press, radio, TV or online. Alternatively, research focuses not on particular media but subsidization of managerial and organizational dimensions such as 'innovation'.

Results show that the federal government continues its traditional hesitant stance, as can be seen in several subsidy programs being discussed but never implemented (e.g. canceled initiative for the funding of printed press delivery in 2021, canceled initiative for non-profit journalism 2024). On the state level, all 14 state media authorities run initiatives for non-commercial citizen broadcasting. However, very few of them have dedicated subsidy programs for local journalism, e.g. Media Authority Berlin Brandenburg assigns funds provided through the state budget of Brandenburg.

This research project builds a comprehensive foundation of insights into German media subsidy programs on all levels of state across all media types, accounting for decades of convergence. Thus, it provides researchers and policy makers alike a starting point for discussion and conceptualization of further support programs.

CLP11 Public Media and Public Interest Media Policy

PP 1094 Between remit and restrictions: Regulating public service media's online services

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In light of convergence, scholars have been discussing the need for developing public service broadcasting (PSB) into public service media (PSM) for more than 20 years. It is argued that for reaching their audience and serving the public interest, PSM organizations cannot be limited to providing linear broadcasting only (Bardoel & Lowe, 2007; Donders, 2021). By now, PSM not only offer on-demand streaming services that increasingly rely on algorithmic personalization (Sørensen & Hutchinson, 2018; Van den Bulck & Moe, 2018) but also operate online news sites. More recently, moving beyond the production and dissemination of public interest content, PSM's role in providing "public open spaces" is attracting growing attention (Dobusch, 2018). Yet the changing role of PSM in a digitalized society is contested, leading to heated media policy debates across Europe (Puppis & Ali, 2023). Private media companies heavily criticize PSM's online offer, claiming a crowding-out of their own services despite a lack of empirical evidence (Sehl et al., 2020). Moreover, both populist and neoliberal parties call for restrictions of PSM's remit (Holtz-Bacha, 2021). As various PSM organizations from the BBC to the

SRG prepare for their license renewal, policy-makers and PSM organizations rely on comparative research for evidence for drafting future regulation.

However, the few comparative studies looking into the remit of and restrictions for PSM's online services were conducted several years ago (Schweizer & Puppis, 2018; Thomass et al., 2015; Van den Bulck et al., 2018). Significant changes are likely to have occurred in the meantime. To gain a better understanding of what PSM organizations are obligated to do and prevented from doing online, this study thus compares the regulation in twelve European media systems, namely Austria, the Flemish and French communities of Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. This case selection allows for comparing media systems featuring different sizes (Puppis, 2009) and political traditions (Hallin & Mancini, 2012). To examine the similarities and differences in PSM regulation, a qualitative content analysis of documents was conducted (Bowen, 2009; Mayring, 2022). The analysis included documents such as broadcasting acts, service contracts, and licenses which were analyzed with respect to regulations concerning the provision of online content, digital innovations, the use of AI and algorithmic systems, as well as requirements for accountability and dialogue with society.

Results show that, although online content is part of the remit in the analyzed media systems, what PSM can offer is usually restricted to protect private media. Additionally, PSM organizations are rarely obligated to exploit digital opportunities and innovative digital public service concepts are approached with caution. This stands in stark contrast to scholarly debates that call for bold visions for the future of PSM by taking on new dialogue functions and creating a counterweight to commercially-driven platforms.

CLP11 Public Media and Public Interest Media Policy

PP 1095 Does a free subscription make all the difference? An evaluation of media subsidies aimed at young adults in Switzerland

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News media across Europe are struggling to generate sufficient revenues. Not only are users and advertising increasingly shifting to search engines and platforms (Curran, 2010), but users' willingness-to-pay for online journalism is rather limited as well (Newman et al., 2025). This is particularly evident among younger audiences, who often perceive limited value in paid digital news (Borchgrevink-Brækhus & Moe, 2023). The rise of agentic AI and of the so-called zero-click internet can be expected to intensify the financial ailment of the news industry even more (Sjøvaag, 2024). As a consequence, media companies and policymakers alike are (re-)discovering media subsidies as one way to mitigate journalism's funding crisis (e.g., Trappel, 2018). Policymakers also consider options for dealing with young audiences' decreasing news use, as the latter is closely related to political knowledge and political participation (de Vreese & Boomgarden, 2006).

However, research looking into the effects of media subsidies is rare. The few existing studies show that subsidies can ensure greater plurality by keeping more publications in the market (Gustafson et al., 2009; Haas, 2012; Ots, 2013; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2018). Yet effects on individual citizens remain mostly unexplored. This study thus aims at evaluating a particular support measure for the media industry in Switzerland, namely a free digital newspaper subscription offered to young people who reach the age of majority. It raises the questions of whether redeeming the free subscription is related to news use, media literacy, and civic engagement as well as of how the measure is assessed by media companies. Switzerland's federal set-up allows for comparing between cantons that implemented a particular measure (Fribourg, Geneva) and similar cantons that did not (Basel-City, Neuchâtel). The study follows a mixed-methods design consisting of a two-wave standardized survey of 12,500 young people aged 17–20 in the four cantons, focus groups with young people that redeemed the offer for the free subscription (Fribourg and Geneva), as well as expert interviews with managers of the participating media companies. The questionnaire covered news interest and use, attitudes toward journalism, media literacy (self-assessment (Vraga et al., 2015) and test (Fivaz & Schwarz, 2022)), political effectiveness (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017) as well as formal and informal political participation (Koller, 2017), whereas the focus groups allowed participants to expand on motivations to redeem the free subscription as well as its use and value.

Survey results show that young people with access to professional journalism show greater interest in news, use news more frequently, trust journalism more, and have slightly higher media literacy skills. They also report greater political interest, self-efficacy, and participation. Results from the focus groups largely confirm that young adults that redeem the free offer value journalism for orientation and for following political developments. At the same time, media companies welcome the measure in principle: However, to have an effect beyond media literacy and civic engagement, media companies would prefer a free subscription for people in their mid-twenties who might have a higher willingness to renew the subscription after the free trial ends.

CLP11 Public Media and Public Interest Media Policy

PP 1097 Public service broadcasters and national moral economies: Intergroup fighting and compromises

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Public service broadcasters and national moral economies: Intergroup fighting and compromises

The present predicament of European public service media can be approached through the lens of competing interest coalitions. The central concept here is that of the moral economy: Competition between different interest coalitions takes place against the background of the prevailing moral economy of society. Based on E. P. Thompson's writings, moral economy is the totality of commonly shared social norms and values that form the basis of the social order. Key institutions that sustain and reproduce the moral economy in modern societies are the media system, the education system, scientific institutions, cultural establishments, the Church, governmental bodies, public services (social security, healthcare, police, and military) and others.

Public service media enjoy a special role in European national moral economies. In many countries, they play a central part in the processes of nation-building and in shaping and even controlling the political and cultural public spheres. However, as public institutions, the media have been a site of contestation and compromise between the main national interest coalitions. In this paper, the history and present of Yle – the Finnish public broadcaster – is used as a test case to scrutinise its role for the national moral economy of Finland. Initially, three influential interest coalitions are identified: the ideological-political coalition, led by political parties; the moral-ethical coalition, comprising the spiritual and intellectual values; and commercial interests, which are most clearly identifiable among other interests. Throughout the Yle history, the negotiations and compromises between these coalitions have shaped the role of the company in the larger framework of national moral economy.

Applying the framework of interest coalitions, we can provisionally distinguish five phases in the Yle's history: the national-conservative period (from the 1920s to the mid-1960s); the short liberal-pluralistic period (from the late-1960s to the early 1970s); the period of parliamentary-regulated consensus (from the 1970s to 1993), the technology-driven period (from the early 1990s to the 2020s); and the fight for the company's survival (in the 2020s).

The analysis is based on historical documents on Yle as well as on the research of Finnish social, political, and cultural history.

CLP11 Public Media and Public Interest Media Policy

PP 1098 Sustainability of streaming everywhere and nowhere: The EU's blind spot in the governance of video-on-demand platforms

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This paper investigates the policy challenges faced by the European Union in creating a consistent governance framework for the sustainability of video-on-demand (VoD) platforms. While these platforms have become central components of the European audiovisual media landscape (Koulesz, 2017) their growing environmental footprint, stemming from production, data centres, and end-user consumption, remains largely overlooked in European policy debates (Efoui-Hess, 2019 ; Marks et al. 2021).At the EU level, multiple regulatory instruments touch upon environmental and digital concerns, including the Green Deal, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and Creative Europe (Munch, 2025). While these initiatives establish general sustainability expectations, none specifically target the VoD sector, and they do not adequately integrate audiovisual and digital dimensions (Psychogiopoulou, 2016; Gassman & Gouttefarde, 2021). Consequently, there is no dedicated EU-level framework for regulating the ecological impact of streaming, leaving a significant governance gap in a sector that is increasingly transnational in nature (Munch, 2025).Drawing on a comparative cross-national mapping conducted within the Horizon Europe project StreamSCAPES, the paper examines regulatory measures, greening initiatives, and governance practices in nine European and associated countries (AT, BE, DK, FR, NL, MK, PL, RO, SE), and situates them within wider EU-level frameworks such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Digital Services Act, and the European Green Deal. The analysis is based on a mixed-methods approach combining desk research, institutional reports, academic sources, and semi-structured interviews with policy experts and lawmakers. Based on an assessment of the VoD value chain and a multi-level inventory of policy interventions, the findings reveal that there are distinct logics leading to divergent obligations, incentives, and environmental requirements for platforms. These differences are reinforced by varying interpretations of sustainability in the audiovisual sector, ranging from carbon-accounting requirements to green production incentives or the complete absence of environmental measures (Stephens et al. 2021; Sorensen & Noonan, 2022).The paper argues that this fragmented landscape is not primarily the result of political resistance from Member States, but rather a structural effect of the EU's limited competences in the cultural and audiovisual domains. National measures, while innovative in certain cases, remain isolated and fail to produce a coherent European policy. Ultimately, this paper contends that a dedicated European approach to VoD sustainability is normatively relevant. By integrating environmental concerns

across audiovisual and digital policies, the EU could enhance policy coherence, promote best practices, and guide industry behaviour, thereby aligning the sector with broader climate objectives. In the absence of such a framework, sustainability in VoD remains "everywhere and nowhere": recognised as important but addressed inconsistently, leaving a significant sector structurally under-governed. The paper contributes to debates on multi-level governance, the limits of EU competences, and the normative imperative for European coordination in digital and audiovisual media policy.

DMM01 Technologies of Migration Control

PP 0431 AI Rationales: Imagining and integrating artificial intelligence for migration governance in London and New York

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Migration and its governance are increasingly caught up in the promises and deployments of new AI technologies. While increasing attention is paid to how nation states deploy AI-driven technologies for border control, in this paper we examine the scale of the city – in particular of the global cities London and New York as spaces and contexts where AI is woven into migration governance.

The technologies of the border have expanded well beyond the outer borders of nation-states and have become increasingly integrated in the management of all elements of urban life – from schooling, to access to health and housing for migrants being monitored and governed through accumulation of data and predictive AI technologies. Thus, cities are now turning into "inner borders" (Chouliaraki and Georgiou, 2022), with migrant lives being subjected to decisions made based on data collected anywhere in the world. Scholarship has shown how global cities might be key sites for the realisation, even experimentation of technologies of the border (Molnar, 2020), but also how they are complex sites of migration (Georgiou, 2024). This raises important questions of how new technological systems are inserted into the structures of migration in the city and reshape the lives of those affected by technologized borders.

We draw on fieldwork consisting of elite interviews with stakeholders in London and New York conducted in 2025 and 2026. In both cities, we engage with three key constituencies involved in migration policy and its technological implementation: technologists, policy makers, lawyers. Our interview data with these groups offers transnationally comparative insights into how stakeholders: i.) design and build the technological systems (technologists), (ii.) decide about and devise political strategies, practices and frameworks for migration and urban governance (policy makers), and (iii.) handle, practice and are confronted with legal structures, policies and technologies of migration governance (lawyers).

On this empirical basis, the paper offers critical comparative analysis of the rationalisation and enactment of AI into urban structures of migration governance in situated contexts of the global city. The analytical focus on the city-level allows us to query the tensions in immigration policy and control between the nation and the city. While national migration politics is centred around deterrence, surveillance and deportation ("Hostile Environment" in the UK, "Stay out and Leave Now" in the US), the level of cities often stand in opposition to the performance of harsh border spectacles: being self-declared sanctuaries, and being the lived environment of migrant cultures, where the everyday encounter with the border and its technologies is situated. In our cases this is not least highlighted by the administrations of London (Sadiq Khan) and New York (Zohran Mamdani) whose politics draw global attention.

Ultimately, our paper offers analysis of socio-technical enactments, discourses and practices of AI in migration on the ground. As global cities tend to be at the forefronts of both experimentations as well as of alternatives and resistance, this paper ultimately provides critical insights into practices and counter-practices of migration in times of AI.

DMM01 Technologies of Migration Control

PP 0432 Media (AI) and Migration Practices of Ukrainians in Exile

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The research focuses on how displaced Ukrainians in Sweden, especially women, live with AI-based tools in their everyday lives after migration. Since the full-scale invasion in 2022, many daily tasks for Ukrainians abroad are now carried out through digital systems and interfaces in unfamiliar languages. Translation apps, chatbots and recommendation algorithms are used to correspond with schools, understand social security letters, search for housing, follow the news and keep in touch with family and friends. These tools can make life easier and open doors, but they also create new forms of friction, misunderstanding and emotional strain.

I focus on women because they often bear the primary responsibility for care, communication and administration in the household. The project asks how they rely on AI-based tools to negotiate belonging, legal status and work, and what happens to their voice and sense of self in the process. What is lost, and what is made possible, when a message to a school, an employer or an authority is mediated through machine-generated language? How do these tools affect how women feel seen, heard and recognised in Swedish society?

Methodologically, the project combines several qualitative approaches. Semi-structured interviews and short diaries capture concrete situations where AI is used in everyday life, from quick translations on the phone to more extended prompting and rewriting. Community observations in places where Ukrainians live and meet help to show how knowledge

about AI tools circulates informally, for example when women teach each other strategies and compare results. A small multilingual audit of selected AI systems is used to see how responses differ depending on the language, and how this shapes trust, accuracy and tone.

Overall, the project asks how AI-supported tools shape everyday experiences of adaptation, agency and identity for displaced Ukrainians in Sweden, and what this means for designing more inclusive technologies and support systems in the future.

DMM01 Technologies of Migration Control

PP 0433 Detention as a technological waiting institution

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This article explores how detained migrants, media technologies and techniques of enclosure are entangled in detention centres for migrants who are waiting to be deported. The paper investigates the experience of indefinite detention, and the role and meanings of media technologies, present but also absent such as the smartphones, within this experience of detained waiting. Drawing on the Swedish detention context, this study is based on ethnographic interviews conducted with detained and formerly detained migrants between 2022 and 2024 and will be presented through the use of ethnographic vignettes. Detention centers are not prisons. Yet, the fieldwork has shown that limited and controlled access to media technologies, together with other restrictions, are perceived by migrants as punitive measures that hinder their connection and participation in outside daily life. This study examines the detention of migrants as a socio-technical system that, through present – and absent – technologies, produces a regime of waiting, surveillance and deportability. Here, influenced by Goffman's concept of Total Institution (1961), I propose the concept of waiting institution as a framework for understanding detention, where waiting is the dimension that defines the experience, its role, and purpose in relation to power and control but also, the means through which the system functions and acts. I argue that this institutionalization of waiting is constructed, maintained and fed not only by regulations and laws, but also by both the media technologies available to migrants as well as those used on them to manage life inside the centres. It contributes to breaking down the perception of simultaneity and temporal coincidence between inside and outside, increasing the perception of isolation and exclusion. Finally, findings show that migrants, aware of such obstacles, manage to find and implement a number of strategies to appropriate that technology in a different way and respond to such incarceration practices.

DMM02 Post-War Mediations and Belonging

PP 0537 Possible, precarious and fragmented: Narrating return in post-Assad Syria

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The collapse of the al-Assad regime on 8 December 2024 has opened up the prospect of return for millions of exiled Syrians. However, insights from migration studies show that returns are neither linear processes nor do they bear binary outcomes. The prospect of return rather than being perceived as a simple journey from one place to another instead reveals a gamut of possibilities and trajectories from the provisional, temporary and cyclical returns to those of permanent re-settlement in the original "home". Indeed, the transformation of the condition of exile does not represent an unproblematic transition into its supposed resolution, "return" – but rather opens up a space of contestation about the meanings of both return and exile. Narrating the "return from exile" thus inevitably serves to frame that return as a socially and politically meaningful act and embeds within that act different ideological positions and emotional and political investments and aspirations.

This paper investigates how the notion of return has been narrated by Syrian exile media and writers during a critical six-month window (December 2024–May 2025) immediately following the collapse of the regime. During this period many previously-exiled writers, journalists and activists – not to mention the broader community of displaced Syrians – were able to visit the country for the first time in many years and produced a rich corpus documenting and reflecting on these early returns. Through a qualitative thematic discourse analysis of journalistic and first-person narratives on the question of return ($n = 45$) the chapter asks how the individual and collective experiences of return were framed in these accounts? And how were they embedded and contextualised within the political, economic and socio-cultural context of Syria in the immediate aftermath of the al-Assad regime?

Our preliminary analysis shows that return was not narrated as a singular event, but as a process that is at once *possible*, *precarious* and *fragmented*. Return as a genuine *possibility* is made legible through the ubiquitous description of desecrated symbols, in the crossings of the border-threshold into the country, revisiting homes, reinhabiting memories and routines, and reclaiming one's voice in the public space. This possibility of return, however, is at the same time complicated by material obstacles and destabilised by political uncertainty. In particular, these Syrian narratives highlight the *precarity* and *fragmentedness* of return as a function of the unevenness of the post-conflict and exile landscapes and how they operate differentially on individuals and groups in relation to class, gender, ethnicity, locality and political affiliation. Finally, our paper highlights how such narratives also work to project normative visions of Syria's future by creating a discursive

space where the meaning of return is negotiated and re-interpreted as a proxy for broader questions about the political future of the country.

DMM02 Post-War Mediations and Belonging

PP 0538 Statelessness and digital belonging in Greece: Integration strategies through story sharing by Palestinian refugees

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This research project aspires to shed light on legal statelessness and digital belonging by addressing the integration complexities for Palestinian migrants in Athens, Greece. On the one hand, social media is perceived as a mechanism for building and sustaining *social belonging*. On the other hand, for individuals deprived of recognized state identity, it can be challenging to navigate themselves in the digital sphere. Therefore, this research aims to highlight how statelessness can shape the discursive strategies and information-seeking behaviors of Palestinian refugees while they maneuver through the obstacles encountered in bureaucratic affairs both on Greek and European level.

As for the theoretical background, the research project draws upon the concept of "*right to have rights*" (Arendt, 1951) and "*digital imaginaries*" (Appadurai, 1996) and explores how refugees share their personal stories and frame their identities while their legal status remains unclear. Thanks to this human-centered approach, the focus on digital literacy shifts from a purely utilitarian view on the ways statelessness can be seen as a "*digital burden*". The latter can assist in comprehending the visibility patterns to avoid surveillance and the methods operationalized to increase their sense of social belonging, a core factor in their integration (Georgiou, 2018).

From a methodological standpoint, SketchEngine is utilized for corpus analysis purposes. Also, this software is used to track down recurring patterns in refugee story-sharing practices, including information resilience against hateful online content and construction of support networks to overcome state-centric barriers. The corpus is built with qualitative data from focus groups that were organized in Athens, Greece (November 2025). More precisely, participants of Palestinian origin spoke about their social media practices and shared how they embrace their journey for integration in the new social environment.

At this stage, preliminary findings demonstrate that statelessness triggers a "*fragmented digital identity*". In particular, focus groups participants attempt to find a balance between social media activism (story sharing to gain symbolic capital) and high digital caution (safe path for their integration). These results unveil the complexity of integration as a non-linear process; it acts as a space of continuous negotiation where social media can be both a site of potential legal vulnerability and a key to develop the sense of social belonging. By focusing on the unique anthropological and communicative angle of the Palestinian experience in Athens, this paper contributes to broader debates in migration studies (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2019; Leurs, 2023) about how the digital agency of marginalised communities is being expressed through the European public sphere.

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DMM02 Post-War Mediations and Belonging

PP 0539 Afghanistan diaspora's advocacy efforts: Digital practices, intergroup relations, and solidarity

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A series of political disruptions have affected Afghanistan and its diaspora community in the past four decades with the Taliban takeover being the most recent upheaval. As the Taliban regime is nearing the fifth anniversary of its rule, severe restrictions on women's education, media freedom and exclusionary policies are challenged and debated not only inside the country, but notably, also in the diaspora online and offline.

Digital engagements enable political dissidents to participate in essential debates over their homeland which often shape offline solidarity, collective action and activism (Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Ponzanesi, 2020; Zeng & Fang, 2025). While this highlights the unifying potential of digital diaspora, other scholars point to tensions, internal othering, and fractures exacerbated by the digital media affordances (Conversi, 2012; Mahmod, 2019; Minchilli, 2021). Hence, online platforms enable both cohesion and fragmentation, establishing a dialectic and paradox of digital solidarity. How does this dialectic play out

in the context of Afghanistan's diaspora is not clear. Divisions shape offline intergroup relations within Afghanistan's diaspora (Fischer, 2017; Rytter & Nielsen, 2020). However, no attention has been paid to how digital media use in the diaspora shapes and is carried into the real world among members of this diaspora.

Building on critical diaspora studies, I understand diaspora as power-sensitive and contextually grounded (Candidatu et al., 2019; Witteborn, 2019) and inseparable from materiality (Candidatu et al., 2019). Social media such as Instagram became a major platform for informing the diaspora users of the Taliban abuses and discussions about exclusionary policies employed by the regime back home. Focusing on a non-western context and using a mixture of interviews and digital ethnography, this project will address diaspora intergroup relations and online to offline continuation of practices, and activism vis-à-vi the Taliban by answering the following research questions: How Afghanistan diaspora's digital media use shapes and is carried into the material world (and the other way around)? Do online spaces unify or divide members of this diaspora and does online interactions of advocacy and activism extend into offline collaboration, solidarity and mobilization against the repressive regime back home? And finally, how does the Taliban's hindering advocacy efforts, affect and shape Afghanistan diaspora's intergroup relations?

DMM02 Post-War Mediations and Belonging

PP 0540 Home vs. Abroad: How media exposure and perceptions of life shape emigration aspirations during the preparation phase of visa liberalization in Kosovo

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Kosovo, the youngest country in Europe and a society in transition, faces a paradox: while forced emigration has characterized Kosovo's trajectory up to state-building and remains prominent in the collective memory due to rapid transformations, emigration rates today remain high despite ongoing development and transformation. However, this is not a characteristic unique to Kosovo. In fact, middle-income countries undergoing transformation predominantly observe higher levels of emigration along the global trajectory. De Haas (2019) refers to this phenomenon as the development-driven emigration paradox, in which emigration aspirations increase alongside development and state progress during transition. These countries are often also characterized by structural mobility barriers, including visa regimes. As a result, many individuals emigrate to destinations they have never previously visited, and their expectations are frequently disappointed upon arrival (Schapendonk & Van Moppes, 2007; Siviş et al., 2024).

From a communication perspective, this situation raises questions about how development is communicated and perceived in transitional societies. Do citizens perceive long-term development as real progress in their country, or does the information they consume instead emphasize the distance between current conditions and perceived opportunities elsewhere? How do media exposure and perceptions of life influence aspirations to stay or to leave, particularly during periods in which changes in mobility policies are anticipated, such as visa liberalization?

Existing studies on media and emigration have focused primarily on portrayals of destination countries, showing that exposure to images of prosperity abroad increases emigration aspirations (Wood & King, 2013; Mai, 2011; Ennaji, 2012). However, migration decision-making is inherently comparative. Emigration aspirations emerge from evaluations of life "there" in relation to life "here" (de Haas, 2021). These aspirations are shaped not only by imagined opportunities abroad but also by perceived limitations in the country of origin, where perceptions often carry greater weight than objective socioeconomic conditions (De Haas, 2011). News media, political influencers, and platform-specific logics generate narratives that individuals use to evaluate life at home and abroad, making it important to examine these sources in relation to both contexts.

Accordingly, this study examines the development-driven emigration paradox through a communication-based approach during a period of anticipated change in mobility policies. Focusing on Kosovo's pre-visa liberalization phase, the study draws on two-wave panel data collected between July and December 2023 (N = 505) to test whether exposure to news and political influencer content, as well as the perceived tone of information, shapes perceptions of life at home and abroad and thus influences emigration aspirations.

The findings suggest that emigration aspirations intensify during periods of anticipated mobility, when life evaluations are shaped by media exposure. Exposure to social media influencers is associated with more negative evaluations of life in Kosovo, whereas exposure to television and social media influencer content is associated with more positive evaluations of life in the EU. In both contexts, perceived news tone emerges as a key predictor of life perceptions. Consequently, more negative evaluations of life at home, combined with more positive evaluations of life abroad, are associated with higher emigration aspirations.

DMM03 Narratives and Belonging of Ukrainian Refuge

PP 0644 Hospitality as a mediated encounter: The experiences of British hosts with Ukrainian refugees

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 generated one of Europe's largest refugee movements since the Second World War. In the United Kingdom, the Homes for Ukraine sponsorship scheme invited private citizens to house and support Ukrainians, shifting responsibility for refugee reception into domestic spaces. This study examines how British hosts imagined and practiced hospitality toward Ukrainian refugees, conceptualising these encounters as forms of 'mediated hospitality' shaped by media portrayals, digital communication, and everyday cohabitation. The theoretical framework brings together Derrida's (2000) ethics of hospitality, Silverstone's (2013) notion of media hospitality, and Nikunen's (2019) concept of media solidarities. It understands hospitality as simultaneously imagined through news coverage that constructs Ukrainians as "like us", mediated through digital platforms where hosts and guests first meet, and practiced in the home through daily routines and shared spaces. The study asks: how do media narratives shape hosts' moral imagination of Ukrainian refugees? How do initial digital encounters mediate trust and expectations? And how is mediated compassion translated into lived ethics in the household?

Methodologically, the project draws on 20 semi-structured online interviews with British hosts who participated in Homes for Ukraine between 2022 and 2024. Participants were recruited via Facebook groups dedicated to matching Ukrainians seeking accommodation with potential sponsors, mirroring the digital infrastructures through which hosting was organised. Interviews explored motivations to host, perceptions of media coverage, experiences of early online contact, and the negotiation of domestic space, intimacy, and boundaries. Transcripts were analysed using qualitative content analysis with inductive and theoretically informed coding. Findings show that hosting emerged at the intersection of state-led schemes, mediated narratives and deeply personal moral dispositions. Institutional factors-visa rules, financial compensation, and bureaucratic responsibilities-shaped the perceived feasibility and risks of hosting but rarely served as primary motivations. Media and political narratives that framed Ukrainians as European, white, family-oriented and morally worthy underpinned a sense of selective humanitarian obligation and reduced social distance, even as hosts remained aware of cultural differences. Affective motivations, grounded in participants' biographies and ethical self-understandings, were crucial in turning mediated sympathy into concrete acts of hospitality. Digital pre-arrival encounters on Facebook softened the boundary between stranger and guest, reframing anxieties away from racialised fears of refugees toward more generic concerns about online trust and safety. The paper argues that these mediated beginnings and emotionally charged domestic practices can soften-but not erase-the structural asymmetries inherent in hospitality. Cohabitation generated relationships often described as familial or companionate and involved reciprocal learning that challenged simple giver-receiver models. Yet hosts retained control over household space, rules, and access to resources, and hospitality remained conditional. By foregrounding the role of media in shaping moral imaginaries and enabling citizen-led hosting, the paper contributes to debates on hospitality, digital diaspora, and the racial politics of refuge, showing how mediated hospitality becomes practiced hospitality within contemporary regimes of selective solidarity.

DMM03 Narratives and Belonging of Ukrainian Refuge

PP 0645 Competing war narratives: Ukrainian diaspora digital activism in Italy

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The Ukrainian diaspora has played a crucial role during the Russian war against Ukraine. Acting as a bridge between Ukraine and global audiences, diaspora communities contribute to humanitarian support, international advocacy, and the preservation of cultural identity. Previous research shows that the Ukrainian diaspora became more politically active after the Euromaidan protests of 2014, redefining its identity and engagement in response to Russia's military aggression (Kozachenko, 2018; Korzh, Kovalchuk, & Marshall, 2022).

At the same time, media representations of armed conflict are of vital importance for migrant communities, whose "virtual communities" are shaped by and contribute to ongoing media narratives (Keles & Janroj Yilmaz, 2015). In this context, Russian foreign influence operations aimed at manipulating public opinion, shifting political agendas, polarizing democratic societies pose significant challenges (Martin, Shapiro, & Nedashkovskaya, 2019). While diaspora members actively participate in public discourse surrounding the Russo-Ukrainian war, their role in countering disinformation remains underexplored (Maathuis, Ridder, & Stuurman, 2023).

We still know little about the reaction of diasporas when they become witnesses to physical military aggression against their homeland and engage in the hybrid warfare environment of their host country.

This study examines the digital activism of the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy, focusing on their activities to disseminate trustworthy information about Ukraine and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war as a response to Russian influence operations.

The research highlights their motivations and the possible impact of their efforts in countering misinformation and Russian propaganda narratives. The study addresses the following question: do Ukrainian immigrants spread information solely to advocate for Ukraine's cause and reinforce a sense of belonging, or is this activity also a reaction to the "clash of narratives" that has characterized the Italian information space since the start of the war?

For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 content creators, representatives of the Ukrainian diaspora in Italy, on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, in order to identify the motivations, strategies, and perceived outcomes that determine their information activities. In addition, their social media activity was analyzed to identify the most engaging strategies.

Preliminary findings suggest that personal stories of Ukrainian immigrants in Italy are a less common strategy than countering Russian propaganda war narratives. Their informational activism is connected to their sense of belonging (particularly the presence of family members or relatives in Ukraine during the war) but the higher their level of integration into the host country (current profession, language proficiency, etc.), the more likely they are to spread anti-propaganda content (videos, text posts) targeted at Italian-language users.

Beyond investigating this specific case of diaspora mobilization, the study underscores the role of diasporas in the digital information space of host countries and in empowering democratic communities during times of crisis.

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DMM04 Feminist, Queer And Gender Perspectives

PP 0746 Studying disconnection: Refugee women, digital withdrawal, and the online/offline continuum

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This article examines the disconnection practices of refugee women living in the Netherlands, challenging dominant assumptions that equate digital use with agency and empowerment. Scholarship on digital inclusion has largely privileged connectivity, framing digital non-use as a marker of exclusion, lack of digital skills, or passivity (Scheerder et al., 2017; Leung, 2020). Such assumptions disproportionately affect refugee women, who are frequently represented as digitally disengaged and lacking agency. This bias is further reinforced by media-centric and online-oriented approaches to digital methods which foreground participation and visibility and makes invisible disconnection.

Drawing on qualitative fieldwork and 20 in-depth interviews with refugee women in the Netherlands, this study builds on the disconnection turn (Fast 2021; Chib et al 2021; Cascone and Bonini 2024) to investigate the tactics of disconnection employed by refugee women during resettlement. The findings identify four forms of tactical disconnection work that allow women to selectively manage visibility and risk across digital platforms. Contrary to prevailing narratives that interpret limited online presence as evidence of digital exclusion or lack of competence, this article argues that digital invisibility can constitute a deliberate, agentic response to hostile and precarious conditions.

The article further contends that such situated forms of agency cannot be adequately captured through digital methods alone. It therefore advocates an online/offline continuum approach to digital ethnography that attends both digitally mediated and embodied practices. By reframing disconnection as meaningful and tactical, this study contributes to critical shifts in digital literacy scholarship away from technopositivist accounts of technology as inherently empowering, towards growing acknowledgement of the impact of post-digital capitalism on precarious users' daily life (Fast 2021).

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DMM04 Feminist, Queer And Gender Perspectives

PP 0747 Daigou trading as cross cultural practice, entrepreneurship and gendered social practice

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Daigou are Chinese individuals who live, work or study abroad and act as informal traders, buying goods from around the world and selling them to clients in China. Their activities are grounded in navigating the distances between Western and Chinese consumer culture and in managing their identity in the West in relation to their clients in China as a practical accomplishment. In this talk we will present an analysis of daigou as a social and cultural practice, recognising its evolution over the phases of economic reform in China, transitions in global supply chains and cultural flows, changing regimes of economic policy, governance and regulation and shifts in consumer culture (Xu, 2025). Daigou takes various forms, from gift giving, carrying goods across borders, sending goods to friends and relations to more organised, professionalised daigou traders. We interpret daigou as a cultural practice drawing on a variety of perspectives in social and cultural theory to reflect on the meaning and practice of daigou as providing a view from below of the social and cultural effects of China's rapid process of economic reform and associated transitions in global cultural flows and shifting ideology, governance and consumer culture.

We show how social and digital media are critical to daigou, enabling them to attract potential clients, market their products and services, establish relationships and form groups and networks of clients. Daigou network capital uses various strategies across multiple platforms and apps, including WeChat, Xiaohongshu, Taobao, Douyin (Tiktok), Zhihu, Weibo and Instagram. Through these online resources daigou advertise their goods and services, share their experience with other daigou, search for potential clients and offer personalised services and recommendations. Daigou are disproportionally women migrants, students and spouses who make use of their everyday competencies and capabilities in provisioning goods, understanding consumer needs, projecting authenticity and sustaining relationships with their clients. They use their bodies, interactional skills and emotions to present goods and manage their relationships with clients, focusing on care, taste and trust (Pugh, 2024), through which they seek to overcome the distance between their clients and the products they desire, connect disparate cultural expectations across borders and infusing transactions with the qualities of cosmopolitan credibility and emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). In their navigation of this dispersed social and cultural environment daigou act as flexible citizens (Ong, 1999) through a practice characterised by messiness and friction (Tsing, 2005), in the context of the contradictions inherent in China's economic reform and global positioning (Saich, 2015).

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DMM04 Feminist, Queer And Gender Perspectives

PP 0748 Voicing queer diasporas through critical podcasting

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This paper examines how queer Middle Eastern migrants negotiate belonging, visibility, identity, and community building through alternative streaming platforms, using critical podcasting as both a methodology and a public-facing output (McMain et al., 2025). Situated within the ECREA Diaspora, Migration and the Media section, the paper responds to calls to explore how streaming platforms are reshaping transnational connections, identity formations, and everyday media practices for queer migrants navigating multiple regimes of surveillance and marginalization.

Drawing on queer diaspora theories (Gopinath, 2005), media, and platform studies, the paper conceptualizes "queer diasporic spectatorship" as a relational practice that unfolds across interfaces, curated catalogues, and the wider digital ecosystems in which viewers encounter and discuss content. Methodologically, it mobilizes a ten-episode podcast series that brings into conversation three groups: founders of human-curated queer streaming platforms, queer migrants from Middle Eastern backgrounds who use these platforms in their everyday lives, and media scholars reflecting on digital infrastructures, inequalities, and curation models. Treating podcast episodes as semi-structured interviews and sites of co-created knowledge, the research combines digital ethnography and content analysis to foreground how participants articulate tensions between visibility and exposure, curation and market logics, and private viewing and networked community.

The paper argues that podcast-based engagement is uniquely suited to research on migration and media because it renders audible the accents, hesitations, and emotions that structure diasporic media encounters, while also circulating these voices beyond the academy as an accessible, vernacular archive. By centering queer migrants' encounters with alternative platforms, the research illuminates how non-mainstream distribution models can function as fragile yet vital infrastructures

for transnational connection, affective world-making, and counter-public formation under conditions of rising border control and hostility toward migrants.

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DMM04 Feminist, Queer And Gender Perspectives

PP 0749 Between homes and screens: Post-migration digital media practices and negotiation of gender among young Chinese migrant women

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Transnational migrants increasingly rely on digital media for information-seeking, decision-making, and identity negotiation across both pre- and post-migration stages. Building on the theory of mediatized migrants (Hepp et al., 2013), this study examines post-migration digital media practices among young Chinese migrant women in the United States, focusing on the interplay between gender negotiation and everyday engagement with digital platforms.

The study is situated within two key complexities. First, it challenges the assumption that migration entails a linear transition from "home" to "host" media environments. Instead, migrants experience an (a)synchrony between migration and media accessibility: continued access to homeland platforms, alongside early and uneven engagement with host-society media, produces overlapping and sometimes conflicting media ecologies. Second, gender is understood as a socially constructed and discursively shaped process that is imagined, perceived, and lived differently across home and host societies. While existing scholarship on Chinese migrant women has rarely examined this process in depth, this study explicitly rejects a linear logic that frames Chinese and U.S. femininities as moving from conservative to liberal, or from traditional to modern.

This study-in-progress draws on semi-structured interviews with young Chinese migrant women residing in the United States, supplemented by a think-aloud method. Preliminary findings suggest that migrant women's platform engagements reveal a blurred boundary between interpersonal and mass communication: being influenced by media, influencing others, and actively creating, circulating, and maintaining gendered cultural meanings occur simultaneously within platformed environments. Gender negotiation unfolds through a platform logic in which algorithmically shaped media environments not only provide discursive resources for imagining womanhood in both home and host societies, but also function as spaces where young migrant women seek affirmation, alignment, and validation of their negotiated gender roles and identities.

Notably, young Chinese migrant women often occupy a liminal position in gender negotiation. Rather than fully aligning with gender norms from either home or host societies, participants reflect critically on both, selectively drawing from multiple cultural repertoires. Their diasporic experiences create a space in which gender beliefs are negotiated through the interplay of personal values, transnational cultural references, and platform-specific norms and popularity metrics that shape visibility and legitimacy.

Theoretically, this study advances the theory of mediatized migrants by proposing an intra-actional approach (Barad, 2007) to media and migrants' gender negotiation. Rather than treating media as external forces acting upon gender, or gender as a stable lens shaping media use, this approach conceptualizes them as co-constitutive processes. Media use thus becomes not merely a site where gender negotiation occurs, but the very form through which gender negotiation is enacted.

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DMM05 News Representation Reporting on Migration

PP 0856 Fragmented traces of racism in the news – A framework for measuring large-scale patterns

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In this paper, we introduce a novel framework for measuring traces of racial stereotyping and overt racism as well as anti-racist portrayals in large-scale news corpora. We start with a multidimensional definition of racism as a multi-level social phenomenon and then discuss the extent to which existing media content research measures these individual dimensions. We conclude that empirical communication scholarship often considers the various sub-dimensions of the racist ideology in

isolation, neglecting their ideational relationship and the concept of racism as their overarching umbrella. In doing so, the research landscape mirrors the fragmented occurrence of these various traces of racism in public discourse. At the same time, however, it ignores the epistemological value of seeing them in relation. To fill this gap, we present a framework for the joint measurement of the different subdimensions of racism in news discourse within and across racialized groups and media outlets. It captures and combines socio-structural dimensions (which social positions are different racialized groups portrayed in?), core ideological components (are groups presented as encroaching on privileges of the dominant group, are they portrayed as morally inferior or less competent, are there traces of othering, homogenization and essentialization?), the boundaries groups are differentiated by (are they differentiated using cultural or racial terms and are there underlying similarities along racial lines?), and threat and benefit portrayals.

We argue that with recent advances in computational methods, it is possible to apply this multidimensional framework over large text corpora to show divergent patterns of reporting for different racialized groups – allowing a differentiation of patterns of overtly racist messaging, "mere" stereotyping, moderating portrayals, and anti-racist portrayals of different groups. This allows for comparisons between groups, as well as across corpora of a variety of news outlets within the same period, as well as time series over different periods. With such a multidimensional measurement tool, we argue that research can trace causal mechanisms that explain the differing portrayals of racialized groups – for example, the role perceived cultural distance as well as intergroup contact play in enabling stereotyping and othering, or strategic focus on specific racial outgroups by right-wing media, as well as anti-racist responses within left-wing media; or the way the perceived social status informs group stereotypes concerning moral status and competency. We discuss how such a birds-eye-view on fragmented expressions of (anti-)racist ideology can complement and enrich existing qualitative and quantitative research and enable us to show ways for journalists and politicians to participate in reducing racial inequalities.

DMM05 News Representation Reporting on Migration

PP 0857 A relational framework for digital news (non-)use: Examining diasporic groups' dilemma of news engagement under information overload, negative news exposure, and disinformation spread during crises

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News engagement frameworks have emerged as alternatives to consumption/avoidance models by emphasizing users' active interaction with news. However, existing scholarship continues to privilege news use over news nonuse, tending to overlook (non-)use as a spectrum through which users agentically oscillate. Moreover, media-centric approaches often obscure how digital news (non-)use is shaped by relational dynamics in everyday life. Addressing these gaps, this study adopts a relational perspective and extends the news (non-)use model developed by Chib et al. (2021) through examining its applicability to digital news engagement in a very peculiar context: Ukrainian diasporic communities navigating the dilemmic circumstance of maintaining transnational ties during war through digital media and pursuing integration in host societies. The communities constitute a compelling case for examining how use and nonuse practices are fluidly enacted by such groups highly dependent on digital media. As digital news has become a socially embedded experience- interwoven with everyday activities through the ubiquity, personalization, and participatory affordances of digital technologies- the relational framework of (non-)use offers a robust lens for understanding news engagement as entangled within networks of relational factors. Moreover, while existing research has largely focused on ordinary users' news experiences, this framework allows for the examination of news (non-)use among marginalized users, such as diasporic groups.

Based on in-depth interviews with 22 Ukrainian diasporic individuals in the Netherlands, the study employed an iterative qualitative analysis. The relational codes were organized into five themes: users' relationships with others, the self, digital technologies, news sources, and news content. Consequently, after using Atlas.ti 24 for structuring the codes, Gephi 0.10 was utilized to carry out a novel co-occurrence analysis and mapping the codes' networks.

The findings demonstrate that nonuse strategies were associated with users' aversion to negative news and disinformation (user-content relation), their distrust of Russian outlets, Ukrainian official news, and informal social media channels (user-source relation), as well as their aversion to certain social media platforms (user-tech relation). These dynamics foster active nonuse strategies- including self-control, non-adoption, blocking, and departure- as means of self-preservation (user-self relation). At the same time, strong connections to their homeland and their personal ties compel continued engagement with war-related news, often mediated through trusted relational gatekeepers such as family members. Nonetheless, users' relationships with others can lead to digital disguise, particularly when it comes to their disagreements with their personal connections or the risk of Russian surveillance. Faced with this tension, exercising relative and hybrid forms of nonuse, including selective disengagement and self-control, enabled a restricted and situational news engagement.

Overall, the study highlights the relationally contingent and agentic nature of news (non-)use in diasporic settings under conditions of war, distrust, and information disorder, and advances relationality as a critical lens for understanding contemporary news engagement. The study recommends using methods beyond qualitative approaches to investigate digital news (non-)use on a broader scale. It also calls for exploring how distrust, disinformation exposure, and negative

news environments push users toward generative AI for news engagement- and how this shift may, in turn, reinforce their distrust.

DMM05 News Representation Reporting on Migration

PP 0858 Platform-mediated news role negotiation and diasporic belonging among Cuban migrants in Spain

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This paper examines how first-generation Cuban migrants in Spain engage with Cuban news media (both state-controlled outlets and alternatives to the state) and how they negotiate journalistic role expectations under transnational conditions marked by political polarization, restricted media pluralism, and digital platformization. Moving beyond Western-centric models that conceptualize integration as a linear absorption into a host-country media sphere, the study foregrounds the specificity of the Cuban news ecology and the political and affective stakes migrants attach to competing sources of information. The Cuban case complicates common assumptions about media, mobility, and belonging by showing how cross-border informational ties persist and are reworked in diaspora.

The paper asks how journalistic roles are reinterpreted when news travels beyond territorial and institutional boundaries through platformized routes of discovery, sharing, and discussion. Here, "platform-mediated" refers to the socio-technical arrangements through which migrants encounter, evaluate, and circulate news, encompassing practices such as interpersonal forwarding, group-based circulation, channel subscriptions, and feed-driven exposure, all of which are shaped by visibility rules, recommender logics, and moderation practices. Conceptually, the study combines audience research and diaspora studies with journalism role theory to analyze how migrants attribute, contest, and reprioritize functions such as informing, legitimizing, contesting, and providing civic orientation across different Cuban outlets, and how these attributions intersect with everyday negotiations of identity and belonging in Spain.

Empirically, the study draws on 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Cuban migrants living in Barcelona and Madrid, recruited through convenience and snowball sampling to capture variation in gender, age, and length of residence. Interviews explored participants' news repertoires, credibility criteria, experiences of platform-based circulation (including group dynamics and feed exposure), interpretations of journalistic roles across Cuban outlets, and perceptions of Spanish news coverage within a broader informational environment. Data are analyzed through thematic analysis combined with role-focused coding, using a deductive codebook based on established role frameworks and iterative inductive refinement from the interview material. Spanish news is not treated as a normative benchmark. Instead, it is examined as a site of informational and representational friction through which understandings of Cuban journalism are recontextualized, challenged, or reaffirmed.

Preliminary findings indicate three dynamics. First, participants describe hybrid, platform-dependent repertoires in which Cuban news is frequently accessed via group circulation and interpersonal sharing, shaping what becomes salient and trustworthy and producing uneven exposure depending on network composition. Second, Cuban state media are often perceived as ideologically constrained and legitimizing yet remain symbolically tied to national identity, while alternative Cuban journalism is more commonly associated with critique, watchdog expectations, and community mediation. Third, Spanish news is valued for everyday orientation but also linked to uneven recognition and representation, which can intensify migrants' reassessments of Cuban outlets in relation to diasporic belonging. Overall, the paper offers a non-deterministic account of how platform infrastructures and role attribution contribute to mediated belonging and political sense-making across borders, with implications for the future formation of diasporic publics under unequal media power.

DMM06 Social Media, Agency and Resilience

PP 0962 Critical integrative resilience and selective visibility: Social media practices, belonging, and critique among post-migrant youth of Turkish origin in Germany

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As digital media have become embedded in everyday life, migrants' and post-migrant generations' negotiations of belonging, visibility, and participation increasingly unfold within mediated contexts shaped by public discourses, experiences of discrimination, and conditions of recognition. This paper examines how young descendants of labour migrants from Turkey in Germany use social media not only for communication, but as a space where identity, visibility, and belonging are actively negotiated. It introduces the concept of critical integrative resilience to capture how integrative orientations and critical awareness coexist in everyday digital practices.

Empirically, the study draws on an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design combining six focus group discussions (n = 32), an online survey (n = 117), and short audiovisual "voiceform" interviews with young people aged 15–29 who were born and raised in Germany. The analysis focuses on social media use as a space of self-representation, selective visibility, and mediated participation.

Findings show that most participants articulate integrated, bicultural, or hybrid identifications and routinely move between German, Turkish, and transnational cultural repertoires. Social media platforms—particularly Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp, and TikTok—function as flexible environments for multilingual expression, peer networking, and cultural exploration. While participants actively follow political news and public debates, public political expression remains limited. This restraint does not reflect political apathy but rather a strategic response to perceived discrimination, misrecognition, and anticipated judgement in digital publics.

Against deficit-oriented integration narratives, participants neither withdraw from public life nor engage in overt confrontation. Instead, they practice critical integrative resilience: a composed, reflective orientation that combines affirmation of belonging with a critical awareness of structural inequalities and dominant media discourses. This form of resilience is enacted through selective self-presentation, careful audience management, bilingual and hybrid expression, and reliance on trusted peer and transnational networks. In this sense, social media emerges as a key site where young people imagine and practice alternative forms of participation that remain engaged yet self-protective.

Conceptually, the paper builds on acculturation and bicultural identity research (Berry, 1997; 2005; Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005), critical approaches to representation (Hall, 1997), and post-migrant perspectives on recognition and belonging (Foroutan, 2020; 2021), while advancing critical integrative resilience as an empirically grounded concept of post-migrant digital agency. It shows that post-migrant youth are neither assimilating nor resisting, but instead develop calm, strategic ways of belonging and critique through everyday digital practices, thereby moving beyond assimilationist or resistance-only frameworks in debates on digital transnationalism.

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DMM06 Social Media, Agency and Resilience

PP 0963 Making sense of visibility and belonging: Social media practices of young Chinese migrants in London

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As a global city, London fosters a diverse and inclusive environment embracing diversity, difference and otherness. However, this sense of openness coexists with enduring racialised boundaries. Stereotypes that portray Chinese migrants as hard-working, silent and compliant continue to shape how they are recognised and how they perceive themselves. Historically, these representations are rooted in the notion of the "Yellow Peril", which positions East Asians as a big threat to Western civilisation and social order. As such overt rhetoric has declined over time, the concept of "Model Minority" arose in the postwar decades, representing a shift from overt exclusion to conditional inclusion. Although these two appear oppositional, both of them are just different ways of control. "Threatening" outsiders should be excluded, while "good" migrants are tolerated as long as they remain compliant, high-achieving and silent. This kind of conditional acceptance can be fragile and reversible under certain situations such as Covid-19.

Therefore, this paper examines how young Chinese migrants in London engage with social media to negotiate exclusion, belonging and identity. Drawing on in-depth interviews and participant observations, it shows that some young people critically reflect on subtle and everyday forms of exclusion and utilise digital platforms to reclaim voice and agency. On more public-facing social media like Rednote, individual frustrations are transformed into public discourses, allowing personal experiences to resonate collectively and using the visibility of the platform to challenge dominant power relations that often remain invisible in institutional contexts. On platforms such as WeChat and Instagram which are more relationally bounded, they maintain existing relationships and establish new connections, building communities and their senses of belongings. Social media thus acts not only as the site of resistance but also spaces for identity performance. Many participants emphasised that they are not simply Chinese or British but occupying fluid identity positions. Identity negotiation is not confined to significant life events but embedded in the everyday life, from how to introduce oneself, to what to eat, what to dress, how to spend leisure time, which all could be traced on social media platforms. On the one hand, digital practices reproduce and reaffirm national attachments through selective content consumption, language-switching, the sharing of culturally and emotionally meaningful moments. On the other hand, social media also facilitates the construction

of cosmopolitan identities rooted in daily life. Through food, clothing, travel, and other ordinary choices, young migrants juxtapose cultural references, signal cosmopolitan openness and remain nationally grounded across platforms, enabling simultaneous attachments while resisting being read through a single, fixed address.

This paper argues that young migrants do not primarily seek full integration into a dominant mainstream. Instead, they value London as a space characterised by less judgement and normative pressure. Social media supports this orientation by enabling relationship maintenance and audience-specific self-presentation, fostering open-ended forms of belonging that align with aspirations for flexibility, autonomy and future mobility.

Keywords

young Chinese migrants, social media practices, identity performance, nationalism and cosmopolitanism

DMM06 Social Media, Agency and Resilience

PP 0964 A socio-cognitive analysis of Run philosophy as collective cognitive resistance against authoritarian narratives in Chinese digital migration discourse

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Digital activism is frequently framed through the lens of mobilization and visibility; however, in authoritarian contexts, activism often manifests as a nuanced struggle over meaning-making and the reappropriation of life trajectories. This study investigates “Run Philosophy” (润学, Run Philosophy), an emerging and contentious digital discourse phenomenon within the Chinese digital sphere that advocates for emigration as a form of socio-political resistance. While mainstream narratives celebrate digital connectivity, Run Philosophy participants often marginalized by rigid social hierarchies and precarious economic conditions, utilizing platforms like Reddit to circumvent domestic censorship, creating a unique “counter-public” space.

Adopting Teun A. van Dijk’s Socio-Cognitive Approach (SCA) and a Grounded Theory coding process, this research analyzes posts of Run Philosophy group on Reddit to uncover how participants construct “Mental Models” that legitimize migration. The study argues that Run Philosophy is not merely an expression of individual desire but a collective cognitive resistance against the “layered inequalities” imposed by state-driven narratives.

The analysis identifies three core functional themes that underpin this digital activism. First, Politicized Future: through the construction of metaphors such as “historical garbage time” (历史的垃圾时间) and “systemic hopelessness,” participants build a rational survival foundation for migration. This temporal dimension of activism highlights the inequality of “future-making” in a high-pressure society. Second, Politicized Family: the discourse deconstructs traditional Confucian notions of parental love, reframing the parent-child relationship as a site of biopolitical labor exploitation across generations. By objectifying these intimate bonds, participants dismantle the moral barriers to exit. Third, Politicized Everyday Life: through self-alienating and racialized terminology (e.g., “Huminoid Mine(人矿), “ Niuma (牛马)), participants engage in a radical form of self-denigration that serves as a precursor to “self-purification” and de-politization in their envisioned destinations.

This research contributes to the preconference theme by examining the technological and structural barriers that govern this movement. The transition to platforms like Reddit signifies a strategic response to domestic “algorithmic governance,” yet it also exposes new inequalities regarding digital literacy and the “VPN barrier” required to access these dissident spaces. Ultimately, this study asserts that Run Philosophy represents a sophisticated form of digital activism where the “activist” act is not a public protest, but the collective deconstruction of an imposed reality. It challenges the “simplistic measures of access” by showing how influence is built through shared cognitive models that reclaim agency under authoritarianism.

DMM08 Methods, participation and digital inclusion

PP 1163 Navigating formal and informal resources for digital inclusion: The case of refugee integration in the Netherlands

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Refugees from countries in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere must adapt quickly to the bureaucratic processes and societal expectations of Western European countries in order to obtain permanent residence. In highly digitalized societies like the Netherlands, integration policies increasingly emphasize rapid “self-sufficiency,” which includes developing digital literacies required for employment, bureaucracy, and social participation. For refugees, this means integrating digitally into a new society. While prior research has examined the role of digital technologies in refugee adaptation more broadly (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019; Udwan et al., 2020), less is known about the challenges that emerge within the formal civic integration process (“inburgering” in Dutch). Moreover, existing studies rarely examine both individual and institutional perspectives, leaving a gap in our understanding of how “digital integration” is experienced and perceived across key actors. This paper draws on a qualitative study conducted at an integration organization in the south of the Netherlands, comparing refugees’ digital experiences with the perceptions of staff members. Data collection is ongoing and will conclude in 2025. To date,

ten in-depth interviews have been conducted (eight with staff members and two with refugees), alongside observations of integration courses and a digital skills workshop organized as an action component with a research team. Eight additional interviews with refugees will be completed by the end of 2025. The data are analyzed using thematic analysis, guided by sensitizing concepts from the digital inequality literature. Prior research shows that marginalized communities often rely on informal strategies—such as sharing devices, using family members as digital intermediaries, and balancing official and unofficial information sources—to navigate digitalized bureaucratic systems (Dekker et al., 2018; Katz, 2010; Marler, 2019). However, few case studies examine how these practices emerge during refugee integration. Preliminary findings reveal gaps between the formal support channels promoted by institutions and the informal strategies refugees use to navigate digital requirements. While refugees value and make use of institutional resources, they often turn to family members or peers when encountering digital barriers, rather than to formal help desks at libraries recommended by staff. Language barriers, trust, and accessibility shape these choices. Refugees also rely on social media and AI-based tools, including large language model chatbots, to manage the complexity of integration-related bureaucracy. Staff members, by contrast, express skepticism toward these platforms, emphasizing concerns about misinformation, privacy, and the reliability of non-official sources. Social media, in particular, is viewed by staff as a source of confusion or false rumors, whereas refugees value it for timely and linguistically accessible information. These findings have implications for both theory and practice. Theoretically, the study contributes to research on how marginalized groups navigate digitalized bureaucratic systems by extending this work into the refugee integration context. Refugees' informal digital practices demonstrate resilience and creativity but often remain invisible or are viewed as problematic by institutions. Practically, as integration is increasingly framed as a two-way process, the findings suggest that aligning institutional support with refugees' digital practices may enhance digital inclusion and make integration efforts more responsive to everyday realities.

DMM08 Methods, participation and digital inclusion

PP 1164 Mediating digital welfare: Migrant agency, participation, and the case for early co-design

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Mediating Digital Welfare: Migrant Agency, Participation, and the Case for Early Co-Design

Across the Nordic countries, digitalisation has become a central feature of welfare governance and labour market integration, profoundly shaping how migrants encounter public institutions, access rights, and communicate with authorities. Digital platforms, data-driven systems, and increasingly AI-supported tools are often framed as facilitating inclusion and efficiency. However, research increasingly shows that these developments also generate new forms of exclusion, opacity, and uneven participation for migrants navigating highly digitalised welfare and labour market environments. This paper presents a systematic interdisciplinary literature review conducted as part of the Forte-funded project DIG-NAV: Digital Navigation of Migrants in the Swedish Labour Market, focusing on migration at the intersection of media, digital infrastructures, and welfare governance.

Drawing on a corpus of 41 peer-reviewed studies identified through structured searches in Scopus and Web of Science, the review maps dominant analytical themes, methodological approaches, and conceptual gaps in research on migration, media, and labour market inclusion in the Nordic context. The analysis identifies six recurring thematic clusters, including digital tools for migrant inclusion, migrants' use of digital media for job search and entrepreneurship, transnational digital practices, digital placemaking, digital racism, and studies that reference digitalisation without substantively engaging migrants' communicative agency or institutional power relations. Across these strands, the literature often foregrounds technological solutions while giving more limited attention to migrants' lived experiences, mediated encounters with welfare institutions, and opportunities for meaningful participation in the design of digital services.

Building on this review, co-design of the project and the pilot research (2024–2025) the paper argues that sustainable and socially viable digital and AI-supported welfare solutions require moving beyond viewing migrants primarily as end users or data subjects. Instead, it proposes **early, iterative co-design** as a participatory media practice that foregrounds migrant voice, situated knowledge, and communicative agency. By involving migrants, public authorities, civil society organisations, libraries, employers, and frontline professionals already at the problem-framing stage, early co-design enables the articulation of diverse needs, experiences, and forms of expertise that are often marginalised in technology-driven welfare reforms.

By positioning digital welfare systems as mediated sites of inclusion, exclusion, and participation, the paper contributes to research in diaspora, migration and media on digital citizenship, mediated belonging, and migrant agency. It advances early co-design as a critical approach for developing more inclusive, accountable, and socially sustainable digital welfare infrastructures in highly digitalised societies.

DMM08 Methods, participation and digital inclusion

PP 1165 Chinese Londoners and the right to the diasporic city: Cultivating collective imaginaries and building urban futures

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For many Chinese Londoners, the early months of 2020 were defined by increasing hysteria around not only a rapidly spreading virus, but also reports throughout the UK of an alarming rise in racial antagonisms levied against those of Chinese descent. This xenophobic surge was largely a result of popular and political rhetoric that pinned the blame for the virus on specific demographics as the originators and perpetuators of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. These racially charged narratives pervaded mainstream and social media, stoking scapegoating, stigmatization, and anti-Chinese sentiments that transformed city streets, already made desolate under lockdown mandates, into spaces of hostility, fear, and non-belonging for London's Chinese population. Sheltering in place with nothing but time, Chinese Londoners soon turned to digital platforms in search of safety and solidarity – an effort that solidified an emerging diasporic consciousness and collective that has, in the years since, continued to strengthen in self-determination, seek allies in solidarity, and urgently lay claim to the city (Lefebvre, 1967).

This project examines how these digital communication practices have facilitated diasporic imaginaries and urban futures for London's Chinese diaspora in the years since the pandemic that not only play out at the juncture of London's digital and material streets, but also contribute toward shaping them. My work expands existing notions of the right to the city through an exploration of the practical ways Chinese Londoners have engaged digitally and materially with the mediated city to cultivate future-oriented spaces of belonging. I focus my discussion on understanding the city as a heterogeneous, communal, and participatory space – three aspirational features of the urban landscape that inspire distinct, but related claim-making pursuits. By exploring the impact of an emerging, trans-diasporic East and Southeast Asian identity on re-imagined ethnic and diasporic boundaries, the role of digital placemaking in cultivating collective spaces, and the potential for creative political action to overcome intersectional inequalities, I unpack how London's Chinese diaspora negotiates the right to difference, community, and participation in the city.

My analysis was informed by 43 in-depth interviews conducted with Chinese Londoners from 2022–2023. I leveraged a unique, multi-method approach, drawing from principles of walking interview, photovoice, and photo elicitation in an effort to both privilege the diasporic individual in the telling of their own stories, as well as capture their deep physical and digital entanglements with the city through embodied and visual participatory research techniques. Leveraging a creative, interdisciplinary methodology helped elicit from my interviewees how their everyday digital media practices facilitated moments of encounter and created opportunities for connection in the context of urban environments and their increasingly thrown*together* nature (Massey, 2005). My findings ultimately demonstrate how digital practices and platforms have forged inclusive spaces for healing and solidarity between previously isolated communities, convened and amplified overlooked voices, and energized a collective movement toward the diasporic right to the city.

DCC01 Algorithmic Cultures In Everyday Life

PP 0068 Influencing algorithms: Interaction strategies of Spanish young adults with recommendation systems

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Algorithmic recommendation systems have become essential to digital media consumption, fundamentally altering which content is consumed and how users experience it. These systems leverage vast amounts of data to analyse user behaviour, preferences, and interactions through algorithmic profiling processes, resulting in personalised recommendations designed to enhance user engagement and satisfaction. Its personalized results, marked by a high degree of opacity, nevertheless exert a significant cultural impact across societies (Burgess, 2021; Poell, Nieborg, Duffy, 2021). In this context, understanding how users, especially younger demographics, imagine, navigate, and adapt to these systems requires a critical examination of the cultural and technological contexts in which they operate (Bonini & Trerçé, 2025; Bucher, 2017; Frey, 2021).

The main objective of this paper is to understand how young adults in Spain interact with algorithmic recommendation systems to actively shape or influence the personalised content they receive across social media platforms and on-demand audio-visual services such as TikTok, Instagram, Netflix or Spotify. This study has been carried out within the framework project "Perception and generation of personalization algorithms knowledge in digital communication platforms" (ALCOM, PID2023-1-48682OA-I00), funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities. Using qualitative methods, more than 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with Spanish young adult users (18–35 years old), comprising a diverse sample that reflects a range of educational backgrounds and levels of digital literacy. This methodological approach provides a nuanced understanding of how users perceive and navigate these systems, highlighting their agency in crafting their digital content experiences.

The findings indicate a strong awareness among users of how various types of interactions influence the content they encountered, revealing three distinct active strategies for modifying these personalisations: passive, adaptive, and reactive tactics. Users employing passive tactics tend to adopt a hands-off approach, allowing algorithms to determine their content choices without significant intervention, reflecting a form of algorithmic acquiescence. In contrast, those utilising adaptive tactics engage more actively, refining their recommendations through actions such as liking, commenting, and following specific profiles, effectively training the algorithms to present more relevant suggestions. Lastly, users representing the reactive tactics proactively curate their experiences, filtering out unwanted content through blocking or evading strategies, thereby emphasising their control over their digital environments.

These results offer valuable insights into the complexities of young adults' interactions with algorithmic recommendation systems. By identifying various engagement strategies, we highlight the diverse ways users navigate and explain their digital experiences while actively shaping the personalised content they receive. Understanding these dynamics is essential as it highlights the importance of user agency in an era increasingly defined by algorithmic influence. This knowledge is essential to walk towards a higher algorithmic literacy of society in different cultural contexts.

Keywords

algorithmic curation, recommendation systems, user agency, personalization, digital culture, cross-platform practices

DCC01 Algorithmic Cultures In Everyday Life

PP 0069 From awareness to strain: When recommender system algorithmic literacy becomes a psychological burden for young audiences

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Recommender systems have become a key infrastructure shaping how young people access, interpret, and engage with online audiovisual content. In response, algorithmic literacy has increasingly been promoted as a pathway to transparency, autonomy, and user empowerment in platformised media environments. Yet, despite its normative appeal, limited research has examined whether greater algorithmic literacy about recommender systems is always beneficial for users' well-being.

This communication examines the ambivalent role of recommender system algorithmic literacy among young audiences in Portugal, focusing on how awareness may, under certain conditions, translate into psychological strain rather than protection. The analysis draws on a large-scale survey conducted in Portugal with participants aged 15–25 who report using online audiovisual entertainment platforms (n = 1,564). To deepen and contextualise the survey patterns, four focus groups were also conducted to understand better how young users make sense of recommender systems and experience agency, control, and perceived influence in everyday platform use. The study considers diverse usage patterns and motivations, together with a multidimensional measure of recommender system algorithmic literacy, to explore how knowledge and critical understanding of algorithmic curation relate to self-reported mental well-being.

Instead of positioning algorithmic literacy as a uniformly protective resource, the communication advances a conceptual argument centred on "awareness without agency". It is proposed that increased understanding of how recommender systems operate—particularly about data extraction, behavioural profiling, and optimisation of attention—may heighten cognitive load, perceived loss of control, and reflexive anxiety when users lack meaningful mechanisms to influence, contest, or meaningfully opt out of algorithmic curation. In such contexts, literacy can become a site of tension: users become more conscious of how recommendations steer choices, while simultaneously experiencing limited capacity to act upon that knowledge.

Empirically, the communication presents selective, non-exhaustive evidence indicating that recommender system algorithmic literacy functions as a conditional mechanism rather than a linear predictor of well-being. Depending on usage contexts and motivational orientations, higher levels of literacy are associated with divergent experiential outcomes, suggesting that increased awareness may protect in some circumstances while amplifying strain in others.

By connecting individual sense-making with platform architectures and socio-technical constraints, this communication contributes to debates on digital culture, youth audiences, and digital well-being. The findings also point to the limits of literacy-only approaches and highlight the importance of pairing literacy initiatives with stronger user agency, platform accountability, and design choices that redistribute control in meaningful ways.

DCC01 Algorithmic Cultures In Everyday Life

PP 0070 Tech-dystopian representations of algorithms in streaming platform documentaries

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Algorithms transformed online media content consumption into a customized user experience. At the same time, a growing popular and academic literature and media content debate the impact on human behaviour. Documentaries or docuseries presenting scientific and technical developments affecting society are among the most viewed video-on-demand (VOD) content. This paper examines these documentaries through the lens of contemporary platform culture, demonstrating how streaming services shape the dissemination and development of algorithmic imaginaries. Without technical expertise, most users derive their understanding of algorithms from digital media, social platforms, and public discourse, typically encountering fragmented information that emphasize technological threats.

The popular discourse about digital technology is dominated by a dystopian approach and a few recurrent topics. These documentaries construct a dystopian narrative, framing algorithmic technologies through interconnected themes of surveillance, loss of control, existential threat, and social fragmentation. However, how streaming platforms shape these representations remains understudied. This research addresses this gap by arguing that mainstream documentaries often mythicize algorithms, simplifying both the technologies and their societal effects. The research identifies various, often contradictory narratives, ranging from portraying algorithms as an existential threat to casting them as humanity's saviors.

To identify representational elements, this research uses the term 'algorithmic imaginary' to describe the stories and myths that shape the collective imagination around recommendation systems. The analysis employs discourse analysis and media narratology to explore how these documentaries construct meaning around the aforementioned dimensions of algorithmic impact. For each thematic dimension, the study examines the narrative structure, audiovisual elements, and representations of digital interfaces, tools, and online content within these films. The analysis also considers how narrators and interview subjects contribute to the construction of algorithmic imaginaries.

Examining how social effects are thematized in documentaries including *The Great Hack* (Amer-Noujaim, 2019), *Coded Bias* (Kantayya, 2020), *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski, 2020), and the first two episodes of the docuseries *What's Next: The Future with Bill Gates* (Zeldes-Neville, 2024), this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how algorithms are culturally (re-)encoded in contemporary VOD documentaries. The paper argues that while these documentaries attempt to deconstruct the mythicization of algorithmic systems, their tech-critical messages remain superficial, ultimately failing to deepen viewers understanding of digital technology's complex social impacts.

DCC02 Gender in Digital Cultures

PP 0039 Reception of tradwife content: How naturalized gender beliefs shape the evaluation of tradwife content on social media

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Tradwife influencers present an idealized vision of women's lives centered on domesticity, heterosexual marriage, and traditional gender roles. While this content is often framed as a personal lifestyle choice, scholars have argued that it may contribute to the normalization of traditionalist and antifeminist gender ideologies—particularly through aestheticized, non-explicitly political formats common on social media. Although research on tradwives has increased in recent years, especially in Anglo-American contexts, little is known about how audiences actually perceive and evaluate this content.

Existing studies predominantly focus on content, discourse, or ideological positioning, leaving the reception side largely unexplored, particularly in German-speaking contexts.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines how users perceive and evaluate tradwife content on social media and which individual attitudes shape these reception processes. Drawing on the dynamic–transactional approach to media reception, the study assumes that media evaluations are shaped by recipients' pre-existing beliefs and interpretive frameworks. Empirically, the study is based on a quantitative online survey (N = 278) conducted in Germany. Participants were shown a short video by a German-speaking tradwife influencer and subsequently assessed the content along multiple dimensions, including critical evaluation, perceived backwardness and dangerousness, emotional responses, agreement with the portrayed gender roles, and intentions for pro-content engagement (e.g., liking, following, or sharing). In addition, the survey measured a range of individual attitudes, including antifeminism, sexism, endorsement of gender-specific division of labor, naturalization of gender differences, profeminism, authoritarianism, and anomia, as well as sociodemographic and political control variables.

Across hierarchical regression models, the naturalization of gender differences emerged as the most consistent and robust predictor of reception outcomes. Participants who perceived gender differences as biologically determined evaluated the content as less problematic, agreed more strongly with the depicted gender roles, reported weaker negative emotional reactions, and showed higher intentions to engage positively with the content. Support for gender-specific division of labor additionally predicted agreement with the portrayed roles. In contrast, antifeminist, sexist, authoritarian, and anomic attitudes did not show independent effects once naturalization was controlled for. Supplementary analyses indicate that right-leaning political self-placement and an ironic reading of the content were associated with lower problematization, while older participants tended to evaluate the content more critically.

The findings highlight the central role of naturalized gender beliefs in shaping the reception of tradwife content and suggest that such beliefs may function as a key interpretive lens through which traditionalist lifestyle narratives are normalized. The study contributes to research on gender, antifeminism, and social media by emphasizing reception processes and by underlining the importance of integrating naturalization as a distinct analytical dimension in quantitative audience research.

DCC02 Gender in Digital Cultures

PP 0040 "Apps don't take things like emotional abuse into account": Dating apps, online harms and women's distant solidarity and community-making on Facebook

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Today a substantial part of the romantic partner or date seeking has taken place on dating apps with over 350M users by 2025 (Jiménez-Muro et al. 2024). There is thus bourgeoning research on dating practices and experiences of users on dating apps (e.g., Ranzini and Lutz 2017; Filice et al. 2022; Denby and van Hoof 2024). Informed by this strand of research, this paper focuses on women's engagement with women-only and private online support groups on Facebook to deal with their experiences of and practices with online dating and harms, such as deception and catfishing. The aim of the paper is twofold: 1) what the functions these Facebook groups around online dating are for users and 2) how women negotiate with and build online networks around risks and harms about online dating.

To understand users' online dating experiences and practices, we need to go beyond an examination of dating apps, as communication and socialisation between users are not isolated to them, especially after the initial match (Broeker 2023). Most existing research examining convergence of media in dating study how users engage with other platforms like Spotify or Snapchat to present themselves or exchange messages, photos or other media or look out for the profiles of people that they matched in other platforms (Gillett 2023; Kang 2023). Existing studies have yet to understand how users make community and solidarity networks online around emotions and harms related to online dating. Resting on 29 in-depth interviews with users that identify as women in England who use dating apps and private and women-only Facebook groups for online dating support, this paper studies online dating as a social practice to address the ways online dating experiences and stories could be studied in relation to solidarity and community-making between users. It examines the post-dating app engagement of users, concentrating on women's practices, experiences, feelings and their safety work vis-à-vis online harms with a focus on their engagement with other platforms and spaces, in this case Facebook groups.

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DCC02 Gender in Digital Cultures

PP 0041 Expressing queerness through 'playful disengagement': The case of Floptok

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This study investigates the expression of queerness as 'playful disengagement' taking Floptok, a memetic subculture of TikTok, as a case study. In our understanding, 'playful disengagement' is a practice through which queerness is expressed aesthetically rather than representationally or politically. In this context, participatory digital practices like memes crucially allow the construction of communities centered around the 'playfulness' of queerness, detaching it from political tensions.

Social media platforms have been identified as empowering spaces for minoritarian expression and hubs of solidarity (Duguay, 2019; Jackson & Foucault Wells, 2015; Tran et al., 2025). Among others, TikTok is believed to allow marginalized social groups, e.g. queer people, to produce their own identitarian narrative through participation in popular trends (Vizcaíno-Verdú and Aguaded, 2022). In these studies, queer identity expression is frequently associated with its political and activist dimension (Duguay, 2023), while more playful and less engaged aspects tend to remain in the background. These ordinary configurations are just as important for deciphering queer desires, intimacies, and identities formed in relation to the norm, yet made possible by everyday life (Shollenberger, 2025).

Our research aims to understand how the memetic logic of TikTok contributes to the construction of disengaged queer spaces, in which the expression of queerness is partially separated from its activist dimension; this is realized through engagement in folkloristic memetic practices that allow queer users to construct an 'ordinarity' that purports disengagement from discourses surrounding the singularity of queerness. Through ordinarity, 'playful disengagement' from activist and representational practices is achieved and reinforced. Digital infrastructures and memetic tools are central to extend these flamboyant aesthetic endeavours into fully-fledged communities.

Floptok, a TikTok memetic community born around 2020, encourages practices of playful disengagement by stripping queerness of its conventional political charge and re-encoding it as a set of aesthetic practices. Our empirical research combines digital data analysis, digital ethnography, and 10 semi-structured interviews with active members of the community, identified on the basis of the results of the digital analysis. The findings indicate that Floptok users do not merely narrate queerness but live it firsthand through forms of legend tripping (Wiggins, 2024), a participatory practice through which users enact and collectively experience a shared legend by symbolically entering its narrative space and participating in its construction. Memes are used to develop the different narrative arcs, which are then 'formalized' in the dedicated Fandom Wiki. Looking at the dynamics of participation, the Floptok community exhibits a form of porosity similar to that of traditional memetic subcultures, one that is grounded less in belonging to the queer community per se than in the sharing and acceptance of already established vernaculars and mythologies. Our work further elaborates on the extent to which the emptying of explicit political meaning, combined with the playful and imitative logics of memes and TikTok, leads to the establishment of a shared aesthetic that comes to overlap, albeit partially, with queer identity. In this sense, the queerness expressed by Floptok becomes one of the many-core aesthetics thriving on the platform.

DCC02 Gender in Digital Cultures

PP 0042 From "crypto bros to "girl math": Negotiating moral economies around financial risk

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Stereotypical figures of finance circulate widely across social platforms, from the daring and entrepreneurial "crypto bro" who supposedly amasses wealth through high-risk trading, to the cautious and self-deprecating figure associated with "girl math," a popular meme framing women's spending practices as irrational or illogical. While such figures are often dismissed as ironic or exaggerated tropes, they nonetheless constitute a powerful repertoire of cultural scripts through which young people may interpret, justify, or contest their own financial practices. This paper investigates the tension between ironic distance and internalization of these financial stereotypes by examining how young Danes engage with speculative activities and negotiate financial risk and responsibility in a digitally mediated cultural environment.

Empirically, the paper draws on a mixed-methods study combining a representative survey of young adults (16–25 yrs) in Denmark with 8 focus groups. This design allows for both a broad mapping of speculative engagement—such as cryptocurrency trading, stock market investments, and other high-risk financial practices—and an in-depth exploration of how participants articulate the meanings, justifications, and moral boundaries surrounding these activities. In particular, the paper takes an interest in how memes, tropes, and influencer narratives inform participants' understandings of what constitutes legitimate or illegitimate financial behaviour.

The analysis is guided by a moral economy framework (integrating Fourcade & Healy 2024; Scott 1976; Thompson 1971; Zelizer 2010) which foregrounds the role of cultural norms, values, and moral judgments in shaping economic practices. Rather than treating financial decision-making as purely rational or individual, the moral economy perspective highlights how ideas of responsibility, deservingness, and risk are socially negotiated and morally evaluated. Applying this framework reveals significant variation in how young Danes position themselves in relation to speculative finance and the digital cultures that promote it.

The findings suggest that perceptions of legitimacy surrounding financial risk-taking are deeply embedded in gendered social constructs. Young men in the study are more likely to frame speculative behaviour as a form of entrepreneurial experimentation, self-reliance, and even moral virtue, drawing on broader cultural narratives of masculinity, innovation, and hustle culture that are prevalent in online finance communities. In contrast, female participants more frequently describe speculative practices as irresponsible, reckless, or ethically questionable, often emphasizing financial security, long-term stability, and moral responsibility. While some women explicitly resist or parody the "girl math" trope, others describe its subtle influence on how their financial competence is perceived by themselves and others.

The paper concludes that there is no unified financial culture among young Danes. Instead, financial practices and attitudes form a fragmented landscape shaped by intersecting factors of gender, values, and participation in digital media cultures. By applying a moral economy lens to the study of speculative finance, this research contributes to digital culture and communication scholarship by demonstrating how internet-born stereotypes both reify and challenge moral understandings of financial risk, responsibility, and legitimacy.

DCC03 Human-AI communication

PP 0176 The value of disagreement in human-LLM collaboration: A critical methodological reflection

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Digital news and online communication play a central role in shaping contemporary socio-political life, especially in increasingly polarised digital environments where mis- and disinformation and selective exposure exacerbate social divisions. Studying these digital spaces often relies on content analysis – a method that, whether inductive, standardised, quantitative, or qualitative, is labour- and resource-intensive. Standardised approaches require coding schemes, coder training, and rule based manual categorisation, while qualitative methods require close reading and iterative category building. In all cases, the scope of research is constrained by available intellectual and financial resources.

Generative AI tools, such as Large Language Models (LLMs), known for their natural language processing capabilities, are already being used to analyse text content in a variety of ways, with previous studies consistently highlighting their potential as virtual research assistants (Argyle, et al., 2023; Chew et al., 2023; Rytting et al., 2023), particularly with regard to extending the scope of content analysis.

As their use in research becomes more commonplace, it is important to examine the quality, accuracy, validity, and ethical implications of LLM usage and outputs (Liang et al., 2023, Farjam et al., 2025). Evaluation frameworks for computational tools often involve comparing the outputs from computational methods against a 'gold standard' sample of expert-coded data (Gilardi et al., 2023; van Atteveldt et al., 2021), with measurable agreement serving as a key indicator of the quality and reliability of the analysis, and contributing to the overall validity of the study (Kleinheksel et al., 2020).

However, in social science research, the 'gold standard', reflecting ground truth, can be a problematic concept (Lebovitz et al., 2021). Accepting the gold standard as a ground truth has implications for the assessment of LLM outputs using metrics such as accuracy, since accuracy measures the rate at which a machine learning or AI tool *replicates* human responses to a specific task. In many cases, however, accurate replication of a (trained) human annotation does not necessarily equate to replicating the truth (Llansó, 2020), particularly in tasks involving the interpretation of complex information structures such as claims, positions, or justifications, which can be challenging even for human coders (Esau et al., 2025).

This study theoretically and methodologically explores how disagreement between LLMs and human coders can be leveraged to improve and extend content analysis. Using a manually coded representative sample of Australian digital news articles on climate change, we examine categories including actors, actor types (e.g., politics, business, advocacy), claims on climate action, science and social movements, ensuring that LLM use is theoretically informed and empirically grounded. Combining few-shot and chain-of-thought (CoT) prompting techniques, and conducting a critical analysis of coder disagreement (Farjam et al., 2025), we demonstrate how researchers can use LLM 'reasoning' to identify sources of disagreement and focus their efforts on improving human-LLM alignment. This study offers an approach that promotes increased confidence in the robustness of qualitative research where content annotation is supported by AI coders.

DCC03 Human-AI communication

PP 0177 Using large language models as digital twins to replicate and extend game-theoretic experiments on human cooperation

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As large language models increasingly serve as autonomous agents and research tools in communication research, understanding whether and how they mirror human decision-making becomes critical. Yet LLMs operate as black boxes shaped by opaque training data, proprietary ownership structures, and systematic biases that raise fundamental questions about their reliability as research instruments. This study addresses a fundamental methodological question for digital culture and communication research: Can LLMs reliably replicate empirically observed patterns of human social behavior, and if so, can they be used to generate testable predictions about unexplored behavioral scenarios?

We develop a digital twin (a computational replica designed to mirror real-world behavioral processes) of classic game-theoretic experiments on cooperation, creating a systematic framework for eliciting and validating strategic decisions from LLMs. We deliberately employ open-source models (Llama-3.1–8B-Instruct, Mistral-7B-Instruct-v0.3, Qwen2.5–7B-Instruct) rather than commercial APIs, ensuring full transparency and reproducibility while reducing dependency on corporate infrastructures whose proprietary interests may compromise scientific independence. Yet open-source models still inherit biases embedded in their training data, requiring rigorous empirical validation rather than uncritical trust. We replicate experiments where over 500 human participants played 121 different dyadic games with varying payoff structures. Our methodological innovation involves testing four progressively complex answer extraction strategies, from simple one-word responses to elaborate multi-step reasoning with logical verification. We found that extraction complexity dramatically transforms the quality of behavioral signals obtained, with simple methods producing near-random patterns while layered verification reveals systematic cooperation structures.

Results demonstrate striking variation across model architectures. Llama reproduces human cooperation patterns with high fidelity, capturing systematic deviations from rational choice predictions. Qwen, conversely, aligns closely with Nash equilibrium solutions, suggesting either superior strategic reasoning or greater exposure to game-theoretic content during training. Mistral exhibits intermediate patterns. Critically, Llama replicates human patterns more accurately than rational choice theory itself, achieving this without persona-based prompting, which is a significant simplification over prior approaches that attempted to simulate individual diversity.

Extending beyond replication, we use the validated framework to simulate 320 novel game configurations outside the original parameter space, generating preregistered, empirically testable hypotheses about human behavior in unexplored strategic scenarios. This approach offers advantages by enabling rapid, cost-effective exploration of experimental landscapes through computational simulation before committing resources to human studies, reducing unnecessary participant burden while sharpening hypothesis generation. Our findings contribute to communication research by demonstrating how independent, rigorous evaluation of LLM behavior can inform responsible AI development. As these systems increasingly mediate human communication and decision-making, understanding their systematic divergences from human patterns becomes essential for holding industry accountable and advancing human-centered design. By establishing transparent methodologies using open-source models, we reduce researcher dependency on commercial platforms that prioritize profit over public interest. This reveals which architectural choices produce human-aligned versus optimization-driven behaviors, informing future development toward systems that genuinely serve human communication needs.

DCC03 Human-AI communication

PP 0178 Chatbot sycophancy in human–machine communication: An analysis of the phenomenon through functional, relational, and metaphysical frameworks, by A. L. Guzman and S. C. Lewis

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The phenomenon of sycophancy in chatbots grounded in large language models can be described as an excessive tendency to agree with users, their beliefs, and their expectations, frequently at the expense of the reliability and factual accuracy of the generated responses. Such behavior constitutes a tangible threat to both the safety and the practical utility of the systems under discussion (Cheng et al. 2025a). Empirical studies conducted by Myra Cheng and colleagues demonstrate that eleven state-of-the-art large language models exhibit sycophantic behavior 50% more frequently than humans, even when the prompts concern manipulation, deception, or harm inflicted within interpersonal relationships (Cheng et al. 2025b). Nevertheless, these models are perceived by users as “objective,” “fair,” and “free from bias,” a perception that may, in turn, give rise to negative consequences, particularly within the sphere of interpersonal relations (Cheng et al. 2025b).

Sycophancy in chatbots, as one of the elements of human–machine interaction, represents a substantive problem that requires urgent diagnosis from the perspective of communication studies, insofar as text-based conversational virtual assistants are increasingly perceived as communication partners rather than as mere technological tools. From the author's standpoint, sycophancy is, on the one hand, an outcome of the training processes applied to large language models, which are grounded in cybernetic feedback loops, on the other hand, it should be examined critically as one of the strategies of anthropomorphization employed in communicative artificial intelligence (AI) systems, aimed at eliciting specific reactions among users. The effects of interactions occurring along the human–chatbot axis may influence communication with other people in real-life contexts and may even affect individuals' psychological well-being (Moore et al., 2025).

The aim of the presentation, conceived as a theoretical reflection grounded in a review of the relevant literature, is to analyze the phenomenon of sycophancy in large language models, employing three analytical frameworks proposed by A. L. Guzman and S. C. Lewis for the study of communicative AI tools functioning as both senders and receivers of content. In order to delineate the thematic scope of the paper in greater detail, the following research questions have been formulated in reference to the functional, relational, and metaphysical frameworks, respectively, which the author seeks to address in the course of the presentation: (1) What constitutes chatbot sycophancy, and what functions does it fulfill from the perspective of social communication? (2) What principal types of relationships may emerge as a result of interactions with sycophantic chatbots? (3) What attributes do users assign to sycophantic chatbots – do these descriptions pertain to perceived similarities between humans and machines, or rather to the differences that exist between them?

The overall purpose of these considerations is to provide a preliminary diagnosis and to situate the phenomenon of sycophancy in large language models within the field of communication studies – at the intersection of such processes as anthropomorphization, gendering, and personalization – in order to elucidate their mutual interrelations as well as the significance of the phenomenon itself, including its meaning and consequences for processes of social communication.

DCC03 Human-AI communication

PP 0179 From computational turn to generative turn: A systematic literature review of LLMs in communication scholarship

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Introduction

Large language models (LLMs) have rapidly entered everyday life, increasingly functioning as assistants and conversational partners. In communication science, scholars have, on the one hand, highlighted LLMs' unprecedented capacity to generate text and images while grappling with risks such as hallucination. On the other hand, a growing body of research interrogates the broader social, political, and economic implications of LLM deployment, including pressing concerns around ethics and copyright.

Challenges

This review addresses three research questions. (a) The speed and diversity of model releases introduce practical and epistemic uncertainty regarding which models are most appropriate for particular tasks and subfields. (b) Communication research treated LLMs in two distinct roles: LLMs as a method and LLMs as a subject/topic. However, conceptual concerns and thematic emphases of these strands remain insufficiently specified. (c) Reported benefits and limitations are frequently discussed in generic terms, with limited systematic synthesis across use cases.

Objectives

RQ1: *How do disciplinary specialization and regional context shape model selection?*; RQ2: *How do studies differ when treating LLMs as a method versus a subject/topic, and how do their topical foci diverge?*; RQ3: *How does LLM use vary across analytical tasks, and what benefits and limitations are associated with these uses?*

Methods

We conducted a systematic review of LLM-related articles published in peer-reviewed communication science journals. Records were collected on 1 October 2025 and updated on 1 January 2026. Following PRISMA procedures, two coders annotated the dataset. The final corpus comprised 618 eligible studies. Analyses combined automated approaches with qualitative synthesis through manual clustering.

Results

The findings indicate that (a) model choice varied significantly across subfields ($\chi^2(120) = 164.59$, $p = .004$). Regionally, publications were dominated by high-income affiliations, with no representation from low-income countries; the income group was not significantly associated with model choice ($\chi^2(24) = 27.55$, $p = .280$). (b) Lexical signatures revealed a pronounced divide. LLMs-as-method studies emphasized operational and evaluative language, whereas LLMs-as-subject/topic studies foregrounded normative, governance-oriented, and user-centered terms. (c) Model deployment differed significantly across tasks ($\chi^2(40) = 108.26$, $p = 3.34\times10^{-8}$). ChatGPT dominated most task categories, particularly content generation and text content analysis, whereas BERT-family models were disproportionately concentrated in analysis-oriented workflows.

Reported benefits clustered around efficiency and scalability for analytic coding and extraction, creativity and pedagogical utility for generative writing and design, and time savings for question answering and information retrieval. Limitations were task-dependent, centering on accuracy for analytic applications, bias for generative outputs, unverifiable sources of information retrieved, and difficulties in multimodal analysis (e.g., cross-modal consistency).

Contributions

This study offers (a) a discipline-wide evidence map of LLM adoption in communication science; (b) a role-based framework distinguishing "LLMs as a method" from "LLMs as a subject/topic", empirically supported by lexical and topical structures; and (c) a task-sensitive synthesis clarifying where LLMs provide measurable value and where heightened methodological caution is required.

Keywords

Large Language Models; generative turn; systematic literature review

DCC03 Human-AI communication

PP 0180 Evaluating AI as a source of knowledge: A theory-driven and unexpectedly stable two-wave validation of LLM testimony

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Large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT are rapidly becoming part of the digital infrastructure through which people search, learn, and make sense of the world. As these systems move from novelty to routine tools, they increasingly function as sources of knowledge in everyday life. This raises a central question: how do people evaluate AI-generated outputs as potential testimony, and how stable are these evaluations over time?

This paper builds on philosophical work on "AI testimony" and uses survey research to examine how lay users position LLMs as informants. Based on Freiman's (2024) theory of "LLM testimony", we develop a theory-driven measure of six epistemic dimensions: intention, normative assessment, trust, propositional content, independence from human involvement, and phenomenological similarity. We study its structure, predictors, and temporal dynamics.

Empirically, we use two preregistered surveys among a representative sample of U.S. adults recruited via Prolific (Wave 1, early 2024: N = 791; Wave 2, early 2025: N = 611). Respondents reported their familiarity with and usage of LLM tools, perceived ease of use, epistemic belief–related orientations (based on the EBI scale), demographics, and their agreement with the six AI Testimony Criteria (ATC) items.

Contrary to expectations grounded in diffusion and public debate, mean ATC levels, factor structure, and predictor patterns remain unexpectedly stable across waves, with only minor exceptions.

Across both waves, the ATC items form a unidimensional, reliable construct, suggesting that users experience these dimensions as facets of a single stance toward AI as a source of knowledge. In Wave 1, a two-step cluster analysis identifies a small sceptical cluster (9.7%, n = 77) and a large consensus cluster (90.3%, n = 714); in Wave 2, the same procedure yields a single homogeneous cluster (N = 611).

Hierarchical regressions show that experiential variables (perceived ease of use and frequency of LLM use) are the strongest predictors of ATC endorsement, followed by epistemic belief orientations that play a consistent role, and demographic variables that have meagre effects.

Theoretically, the findings provide one of the first large-scale empirical tests of a philosophical account of AI testimony. They show that normative dimensions proposed in recent epistemology can be translated into a psychologically meaningful construct and that public epistemic stances toward LLMs consolidate quickly and resist short-term change. Practically, the results highlight that everyday experience and ease of use are central levers through which LLMs are taken up as credible knowledge sources. This suggests that interface design, governance frameworks, and digital literacy initiatives must address not only accuracy and transparency, but also the experiential qualities of using AI systems, if they are to foster calibrated rather than overconfident reliance on AI-generated information.

DCC04 Media Endings: Devaluation, Infrastructures and the Cultural Politics of Shaping Digital Futures

PN 13 Byte blight and digital metabolic literacies: Hospicing software and the politics of preservation

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Software exists in perpetual contradiction: simultaneously ephemeral and essential. When platforms disappear overnight, when interfaces are forcibly "upgraded," when technologies are laid to rest, we glimpse social ruptures that expose the temporal politics of our digital dependencies. This structural condition of "byte blight" fosters ongoing cessations that,

regardless of when it occurs, feels simultaneously inevitable and disruptively premature. Like hardware ruins (Velkova 2023) and satellite reentry (Cohn), software endings are revelatory moments. But software disappearance operates through distinct mechanisms: obsolescence, dependency cascades, infrastructural abandonment. The politics of software preservation turn on which endings are naturalized as progress and which are mourned as loss. Drawing on Vanessa Machado de Oliveira's concept of "hospicing modernity," we propose an alternative framework for engaging with software obsolescence that attends to dying systems and recognizes ourselves within them, precisely when they are failing us. We extend Oliveira's "metabolic literacies" to develop "digital metabolic literacies": practices of attending to software's decline through critical reparative interventions that acknowledge the harms of technological innovation while imagining other relational possibilities. Through analysis of different digital preservation initiatives, we demonstrate how these interventions negotiate the tension between keeping on and letting go. Rather than romanticizing either comprehensive preservation or cheerful "sunsetting," hospicing software invites more complex work: attending meaningfully to software's afterlives and the social relationships embodied within dying technologies.

DCC04 Media Endings: Devaluation, Infrastructures and the Cultural Politics of Shaping Digital Futures

PN 14 Pen and paper: Analog everyday interfaces in the age of digitalization

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Pens and paper are some of the most taken-for-granted technical items in everyday life. At the same time, digitalization has profoundly changed their meaning. We are expected to interact with public authorities via digital hardware and software, just as private communication has been accommodated in digital correspondence platforms via SMS, e- mail and social media. The practice of writing by hand has, thus, acquired a status that is both shunned and debated; shunned in the sense that it seems increasingly rare in everyday life, but debated in research, education and politics through recurring discussions about the effects of digitalization on learning processes and competencies, especially among young people. Although digital technology has become present in all areas of society, not all people face the changes in the same way; some embrace digital tools and others prefer pens and paper – tools that provide familiar interfaces in a radically changed media landscape. However, many people write both by hand and with a computer or mobile phone, depending on the situation. The situation of the analog must therefore be seen in a wider context, as a media ecology in which the analog and the digital interact and define each other. By ethnographically examining the characteristics and affordances of analog writing tools, the project offers an understanding of how today's socio-technological conditions are perceived against the background of earlier everyday conditions and practices. Through its biographical depth, the project shows how people deal with technological change over time, and also demonstrates the importance of including a life course perspective in the understanding of historical processes. "What kind of objects are pens and paper?" may seem like a trivial question, but it is, on the contrary, a crucial one for grasping the changes, continuities and intersections of old and new technologies through which people navigate everyday life.

DCC04 Media Endings: Devaluation, Infrastructures and the Cultural Politics of Shaping Digital Futures

PN 15 Queer temporality of digitalization of public administration

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Despite recurrent declarations of its death, dying and demise, the fax – often quietly and efficiently – persists in the public administration of Sweden, one of the most digitalized countries in the world. As thousands of fax machines remain central in the operation of the public sector – particularly across healthcare, law enforcement and social services – the discourse and material practices of Sweden's digital transformation rarely acknowledge them as useful. Public administration digitalization strategists themselves are often unaware of the extent of the fax use, and in formal visions of Sweden's public sector, the fax is considered and made to be obsolete, while in practice, it remains in use and deemed necessary by users. This tension between the fax's discursive deaths and its central role in digitalization offers ways of rethinking the temporal politics of technology in the public sector. To unpack it, I start not with the technological future of public administration, but with the fax: its supposed end. Drawing on ethnographic interviews with public administration employees in Sweden and Sara Ahmed's theorization of use, I trace how the fax endures through habitual, infrastructural and legally compliant practices of handling personal and sensitive citizen data. I argue that the fax reveals and embodies a queer temporality of digitalization: It lingers, loops, resists and unsettles the imagined linear progression of technological innovation promoted in national, regional and municipal strategies. The use of fax illustrates a temporal deviation that extends beyond the binary: It is not of the time of digitalization, but it does the work of upholding the linear temporality of digitalization. It both resists and facilitates the digitalization's march forward. It points to persistence, repurposing, and sideways duration of so-called older technologies. While the newer technologies are in the process of becoming used, the difficulty of disuse of the fax

unsettles future-oriented narratives of digital transformation and showcases digitalization as a layered and contradictory process in which old and new technologies remain entangled.

DCC04 Media Endings: Devaluation, Infrastructures and the Cultural Politics of Shaping Digital Futures

PN 16 The vanishing paper: Infrastructural displacement at a critical juncture of digitalization

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The starting point of this presentation is the discontinuation of printed news and distribution of letters as empirical examples of current deep-seated societal changes. As a direct outcome of large-scale digitalization as an all-encompassing societal project that has been implemented since the 1970s, today printed news and letters are disappearing as critical networks of distribution for news and information. The presentation engages with the concrete implementation and outlook of the disappearance of paper-based media infrastructures. It also links to broader questions of the common good, shared public orientation and how we come together as societies. Although the process of the displacement of printed newspapers and letters started much earlier, and the death of paper media has been declared repeatedly for at least half a century, it is only now that the distribution infrastructures are disappearing and are actively being dismantled to full extent. For example, Swedish newspapers are rapidly converting to digital distribution, discontinuing their paper distribution in many places in the country. PostNord – the main Swedish postal service – will completely stop the distribution of letters in Denmark from 2026 and in Sweden the distribution has been reduced to three times per week. While digital news and email distribution are taking over, complementary use of paper-based distribution networks is increasingly difficult or becomes constrained to certain groups for example in specific areas. In the case of printed news for example high income earners in urban areas that have access to printed news and can afford paper news. Accordingly, we are witnessing a revaluation of news distribution and the materiality of news. The postal system and newspapers have been identified as key infrastructures of public life connecting individuals across long distances and providing grounds for a shared orientation or public connection. This contemporary moment of digitalization emerges as a breaking point or critical juncture in how societies emerge based on shared public orientations. In order to capture this large-scale change conceptually we propose the notion of infrastructural displacement and argue for the need to explore the "doing", i.e. practices around infrastructural displacement empirical. In the presentation, we outline a proposal of a research design to do so, namely to a) trace and document how infrastructural displacement of printed news and letters is implemented b) develop a conceptual language and methodology to grasp displacement as a necessary part of digitalization as a large-scale societal project and c) highlight and make visible the implications of infrastructural displacement.

DCC04 Media Endings: Devaluation, Infrastructures and the Cultural Politics of Shaping Digital Futures

PN 17 Futures of joy and fear: Emotional landscapes of anticipating the end of landline telephony in Sweden

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Digital futures require infrastructure. As networks of satellites, data centers and fibre optic cables are expanding to enable more data traffic and computing power, nation-wide large-scale communication infrastructures are simultaneously being taken down. The European Union has mandated all member states to scrap their working landline telephony networks in anticipation of building "the Gigabit Society". The owners of 2G and 3G networks all over Europe are decommissioning these systems in order to release frequencies for a future of 5G and 6G radio communication that is still under development. These processes register an ongoing cultural shift that changes the orientation of such networks, from entities defined by qualities of endurance and longevity into disposable objects subject to pre-empted planned obsolescence. In this paper I examine the emotional landscapes (Ruckenstein, 2023) generated by this shift as one dimension of it, and discuss how people anticipate and develop orientations towards futures without these networks. Taking as an example the dismantling of the landline telephony and ADSL based internet in Sweden, I focus on the feelings of anxiety, joy and fear about the encountered and anticipated end from the perspectives of infrastructure workers and citizens. Borrowing the notion of the killjoy from Sara Ahmed (2017), I suggest how these feelings make visible two subject positions with differing orientations towards the future-- one which we could call the "killjoys of the future" who are the people who do not fit into the sociotechnical future that forcefully lands upon them and mourn the loss of collective values of safety and universal connectivity that comes with it; and another one standing in opposition, the "joyful wizards" who steer the future and develop anticipatory practices to manage, know and inhabit it well. These two subject positions expose the differing power relations and futures that the obsolete network holds together: those of organisational innovation and those of public inclusive communication, safety and collectivity and how the dismantling of landline telephony promotes just one of them and enforces the loss of the other.

DCC05 Digital Disconnection and Wellbeing

PP 0285 Kneeling at the wellbeing altar: Spirituality and disconnection in wellbeing discourses and events

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Digital media have become the arena where, more than defining what 'healthy' is, what constitutes a 'good life' is circulated and negotiated. Crucially, discourses on wellbeing are entangled in a capitalistic logic of productivity and efficiency (Baker, 2022), and are suffused with neoliberal values, in which each person is morally responsible for their ability, or lack thereof, to live well, while ignoring the structural factors that largely condition it (Docherty, 2025). Wellness influencers are key contributors to the circulation of discourses on wellbeing, leveraging social media affordances and partnering with the industry. Often, however, their advice amounts to disinformation with little accountability (Flores & Sepúlveda, 2025).

The Covid-19 pandemic foregrounded the concern with health and wellness, in tandem with its commodification as well as with disinformation (Baker & Rojek, 2022). This crisis also accentuated the hyperconnectivity (Brubaker, 2023) and deep mediatization (Hepp, 2020). One of the consequences is the complexity for individuals to manage an increasingly digital life, investigated in the growing literature on digital wellbeing and digital disconnection (e.g. Vanden Abeele & Nguyen, 2023; Moe & Madsen, 2021).

We understand wellbeing as a cultural resource encompassing meanings, representations, practices and values (Besecke, 2001). This paper explores the interest in wellbeing – with its focus on the self – as inextricably connected to a curation of an individual spirituality which draws on several aspects of different religions and spiritual traditions (Heelas & Woodhead, 2005). Some of these 'new age spiritualities' intersect with self-help and include meditation retreats.

This paper draws on a two-part study as part of a PhD project on disconnection and wellbeing. First, we conducted a multimodal analysis (Serafini & Reid, 2023) of 600 Instagram and TikTok content using the hashtags 'wellbeing', 'wellness' and 'self-care'. The analysis illustrated how these contents mimetize forms of spirituality by e.g. ritualizing self-care practices. Among these rituals, moments to disconnect from digital media were encouraged. These messages are entangled with products, services and apps that help maintain these practices, and spoken of as life-changing.

Secondly, we conducted a multi-sited ethnography of wellbeing events in a cosmopolitan environment that emphasized disconnecting from digital media. It aimed to identify how digital media are understood, by both the events' participants and the facilitators, to influence wellbeing. We participated in nature walks, meditation classes, spiritual retreats, digital detox events and others, over the second semester of 2025. Preliminary findings point to a high reliance on digital media to promote and organize wellbeing events, even if this reliance is reluctant and oftentimes seen as inescapable. This ambivalence points to a participation that recognizes the advantages of digital media while being discontent with using it (Cassidy, 2018). In the online discourses, digital media are usually used as scapegoats for societal problems – people not spending enough time in nature, resting, enjoying art or giving attention to the spiritual aspects of life. These events are perceived as breaks in the day-to-day life, when the participants can enjoy an 'ideal' life.

DCC05 Digital Disconnection and Wellbeing

PP 0286 (Re)imagining digital disconnection: ADHD narratives of digital life

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Digital detoxes, slow living, and social media age restrictions frame disconnection as a moral imperative for digital wellbeing. Yet these ideals assume a universal subject and rarely account for cognitive diversity, overlooking how disconnection is perceived and negotiated by people with different cognitive styles such as those with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Despite growing interest in digital wellbeing, we know little about how disconnecting is experienced by neurodivergent populations, or how normative ideals of attention and productivity shape the cultural narratives that guide these practices. Understanding these perspectives matters because those who do not experience disconnection as an uncomplicated good offer critical insights into the assumptions embedded in mainstream digital wellbeing discourse.

To examine these underexplored dimensions, this study focuses on people with ADHD. The question of disconnection is particularly salient for this group because traits like impulsivity, spontaneity, and susceptibility to habitual smartphone use, along with fluctuating attention and focus, can make it difficult to disconnect and meet normative standards of productivity (Beattie, 2025). To understand how people with ADHD negotiate and construct disconnection in their day-to-day digital lives, we used story completion, a generative qualitative method that produces rich, imaginative data by surfacing norms and discourses underlying cultural phenomena (Clarke et al., 2019) such as disconnecting from the Internet. Our study included 80 adults in Aotearoa New Zealand who are formally or self-diagnosed with ADHD. Participants responded to fictional prompts depicting everyday scenarios of connection (notifications, group chats, responsiveness) and disconnection (digital detox, accidental offline moments, app-enforced limits). Guided by disability studies and the concept of crip time, which a framework that reimagines normative timelines to fit diverse bodies and minds (Kafer, 2013), our research

questions asked how people with ADHD make sense of screen time and dis/connection, and how their narratives of dis/connection reshape experiences of time, productivity, and social life. We analysed the narratives using crip-time inspired thematic discourse analysis, attending to how language constructs moral scripts and temporal norms around digital life.

Our findings reveal that disconnection tends to not be imagined as a clean break but what we call 'temporal tethering': strategies that tether a sense of time to digital cues such as notifications, app limits, and screen-time metrics, rather than abandoning connectivity entirely. Stories depict disconnection as a form of self-care, self-constraint, and normative resistance, and in other instances is embraced as scaffolding for focus, but also incompatible with ADHD hyperfocus, relational obligations, or professional visibility. Participants reframed productivity ideals, challenged moral scripts around "good" digital behaviour, and narrated inventive workarounds that expose the ableist assumptions embedded in mainstream digital wellbeing discourse.

Rather than treating disconnection as a universal good or a singular practice, these narratives reveal its plurality—there is no one way to disconnect, nor one ideal state to achieve. Disconnection is imagined as contingent and uneven, shaped by obligations, design, and cognitive difference. By conceptualising temporal tethering, we offer a lens for future research that frames neurodivergent dis/connective practices not as deficit, but as alternative ways of living and pacing digital life.

DCC05 Digital Disconnection and Wellbeing

PP 0287 Moralised digital dis/connection: Navigating the moral scripts that shape digital practices in contemporary China

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Living with constant connectivity has become a defining feature of everyday life in contemporary China, where digital media, facilitated by super-app ecosystems like WeChat (Chen, Mao and Qiu, 2018), have moved beyond tools for communication to become a highly integrated digital infrastructure that structures social interactions, work, leisure, and access to services. This integration has raised expectations for individuals to be always 'online'. At the same time, *digital disconnection*, or intentionally limiting or reducing digital media use (Woodstock, 2014), tends to be framed as a primary path toward *digital wellbeing* (Vanden Abeele, 2021). This presentation examines how Chinese citizens navigate, interpret, and negotiate these two sets of competing narratives in everyday lives. I argue that they participate in moralised digital dis/connection in order to navigate the dual moral scripts that shape contemporary digital practices. In these scripts, constant connectivity is linked to diligence, productivity, and responsibility, whereas intentionally reducing digital media use is associated with self-discipline, restraint, and the pursuit of an 'authentic' life. These evaluations are produced through platform infrastructures and institutional demands, and are mediated by broader sociocultural discourses, including 'digital detox' tropes promoted through social media, influencers, and self-help literature.

This paper draws on 30 diary-elicitation interviews with participants from diverse occupational, educational, and geographical backgrounds in China who have sought to reduce or limit their digital media use. This method allows participants to articulate their everyday experiences related to digital dis/connection and wellbeing. It also offers insight into how individuals from different social positions engage in critical reflexivity of their digital media use as they navigate shifting technological and social scales, such as super-app infrastructures, work expectations, and time pressures. In my analysis, I situate these practices within China's sociotechnical context, where they intersect with an intensified work culture, exemplified by the '996' schedule (referring to working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week), and are shaped by technological tools that blur the boundaries between professional and personal life.

I argue that digital disconnection is active and reflexive. It is a complex form of agency through which individuals attempt to secure wellbeing under conditions of constant connectivity, actively engaging with, reinterpreting, and negotiating the aforementioned scripts as they assess what constitutes a 'digitally good' life. However, this agency is constrained by factors such as occupational demands, reliance on digital platforms for essential services, and the pull of entertainment platforms like Douyin and Xiaohongshu. As a result, many participants experience moral conflict when their actual digital use diverges from ideals or expectations, such as the socially valued forms of rest, productivity, or engagement promoted by social, cultural, and educational scripts. This tension reveals unequal access to the time, energy, and support needed to disconnect and maintain personally and socially valued digital practices. In this sense, digital wellbeing emerges as a socially shaped, contested, and adaptive project through which individuals navigate moral scripts of digital practices and boundaries of autonomy in a constantly connected world.

DCC05 Digital Disconnection and Wellbeing

PP 0288 Disconnecting responsibly? How digital disconnection normalises neoliberal accountability

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In contemporary neoliberal, digitally mediated societies, digital disconnection is increasingly promoted as a desirable and necessary response to the pressures of constant connectivity. From workplace well-being programmes to self-help advice and commercial digital detox practices, individuals are encouraged to manage their availability, attention, and boundaries in the name of balance, productivity, and mental health (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Lupton, 2016). Correspondingly, academic literature has conceptualised digital disconnection as a set of strategies for managing overload, protecting well-being, or reclaiming control over time (Nassen et al., 2023; Vanden Abeele et al., 2024; Vanden Abeele, 2021). While this work has foregrounded users' experiences of digital strain, it largely reproduces a neoliberal framing by positioning disconnection as an individual and voluntary practice centred on autonomy, self-regulation, and personal responsibility (Mennes et al., Under Review). Such framings obscure how responsibility for managing digital pervasiveness is increasingly relocated from institutions, technologies, and labour arrangements onto individuals themselves (De Leyn et al., 2025; Fast, 2021).

This paper approaches digital disconnection through a critical lens informed by scholarship on neoliberal governmentality, responsibilisation, and the moralisation of wellness and productivity (Bozan, 2024; Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Miller & Rose, 2013). It conceptualises disconnection not simply as an individual strategy of self-care, but as a moralised practice that alleviates immediate strain while legitimising the structural conditions that produce digital overload (Bauman, 2013; Cloud, 1998). Rather than challenging norms of constant availability, digital disconnection may function as a technology of governance that encourages subjects to adapt rather than contest these conditions.

Empirically, the study draws on the 360° interview method, situating participants within relational clusters spanning family, school, and work contexts to examine how neoliberal norms surrounding digital (dis)connection circulate and become internalised.

Preliminary findings identify three interrelated patterns. First, digital engagement is primarily evaluated through a productivity-oriented moral framework: connectivity is legitimised when aligned with work, study, or self-optimisation, frequently overriding personal boundaries, while leisure practices such as scrolling are framed as wasteful. Family time is valued yet frequently subordinated to work-related connectivity normalised as unavoidable (Bauman, 2013; Jorge et al., 2022).

Second, responsibility for managing digital (dis)connection is widely dispersed but unevenly allocated. Participants position themselves as primarily responsible for regulating availability, despite organisational cultures that normalise and reward responsiveness. Policy actors are invoked largely symbolically, with limited expectations of intervention, producing a governance landscape in which responsibility is collectively acknowledged but practically individualised (Miller & Rose, 2013; Syvertsen, 2020).

Third, experiences of digital overload are predominantly interpreted as individual failures of prioritisation or discipline rather than as outcomes of organisational norms, technological design, or labour conditions, reinforcing a moral economy of self-management (Cederström & Spicer, 2015; Cloud, 1998).

Taken together, these findings suggest that digital disconnection operates as a moralised practice through which neoliberal ideals of productivity, self-regulation, and personal responsibility are justified and reproduced, even as discomfort with constant connectivity persists. By foregrounding the justificatory narratives, this paper contributes to critical debates by shifting attention from individual strategies to the socio-political conditions that shape digital (dis)connection.

DCC05 Digital Disconnection and Wellbeing

PP 0289 Connectivity justice: A post-digital approach to mobile lives

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This paper introduces the concept of connectivity justice and discusses how it can be utilized in research on mobile, digitally reliant lives. Connectivity justice reframes questions of mobility and data justice for a post-digital world in which digital connection has become both indispensable and intrusive.

Today, we can think about digital connectivity largely as a *precondition for human mobility*. This regards most mobilities linked to some kind of service (e-scooters, air travel, etc.), as well as the support systems related to such services (ticketing, parking, etc.). There are very few non-connected travelers – and those with limited connectivity resources are directly or indirectly excluded from most types of mobility. At the same time, society is increasingly characterized by *post-digital trends*, meaning that many people feel a desire, and are encouraged, to disconnect, "detox", or, at least, monitor their digital engagements (e.g., Cramer, 2015; Jorge et al., 2022; Zhang & Zhang, 2022; Nassen et al., 2023). Some voices even proclaim the "right to disconnect" (see, e.g., Hesselberth, 2018; Kloza et al., 2025) as a component of social justice.

Mobility is thus a social domain where the power differentials and injustices associated with digital connectivity unfold in complex ways. Evidently, such discrepancies have much to do with *mobility justice* (Sheller, 2018), related to whether people's capabilities to move, or stay put, are distributed in a just way. In a platform economy, they also concern *data justice* (e.g., Dencik et al., 2017) and people's capabilities to govern if and how they are affected by datafication. However, an important complementary concept would be *connectivity justice*. Tentatively, connectivity justice refers to the rights and opportunities of different actors, individuals as well as organizations, to manage whether and how they are connected to different – especially digital – networks and infrastructures. This theoretical paper charts the basic properties of connectivity justice, along with mobility justice and data justice, and presents a framework for thinking these notions *together* in research on mobile lives.

In approaching justice, the paper draws on Sen's (2005) capabilities approach to emphasize the real freedoms people have to connect, move, and act, as well as on a feminist ethics of care (Sevenhuijsen, 2003; Verlinghieri & Schwanen, 2020), which highlights the relational and affective conditions of those freedoms. These perspectives together frame connectivity justice as concerned not only with access to infrastructures and data but also with the capacity to sustain meaningful, responsible, and balanced forms of connection in the post-digital condition. This combination invites researchers to view digital mobilities not only as systems of movement and data but as arenas of affective, moral, and political negotiation, where care, autonomy, and power intersect. In the conference presentation, the conceptual and epistemological points will be illustrated by means of focus group interviews about people's practices and experiences of digital connectivity in relation to various types of travel and transit.

DCC06 Attention Economies and Platformed Cultural Production

PP 0255 Against skip culture: Synchronous co-viewing and micro-public spheres in the Korean OTT community 'Watchakjeup'

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Contemporary digital media systems face a paradox: intensified connectivity coincides with deepening social isolation. Streaming platforms promise frictionless access and personalised choice, yet algorithmic curation and interface design privilege solitary, efficiency-oriented viewing—an emerging "skip culture" of accelerated attention (skipping, fast-forwarding, autoplay, and speed-as-default). This paper shifts attention from dominant "central" platforms to the periphery by examining WATCHA, a South Korean OTT service, and Watchakjeup, a user community organised around WATCHA Party, a feature that enables synchronous co-viewing and live chat. Watchakjeup began as a taste-based space for co-watching and commentary, but it has developed recurring rituals and informal rules that sometimes extend beyond entertainment into civic discussion in everyday practice. The study asks**: How can a taste-based community at the platform periphery develop civic capacities while operating inside commercial infrastructures and metric-based visibility regimes?**

Conceptually, the paper reframes Watchakjeup as a platform-mediated community embedded in—yet partially resistant to—platform governance. Drawing on scholarship on platformization and networked publics, it theorises a tension between top-down convergence (interface design, ranking, and recommendation) and bottom-up convergence (user appropriation and coordination). Civic possibilities, it argues, emerge through constraint: platform metrics limit visibility, but they also provide shared objects (films, ratings, chat threads) around which users coordinate attention and negotiate norms. Rather than locating civic engagement outside platforms, the paper treats constraints as conditions that shape collective attention and discourse. Here, "periphery" denotes a positionality in which users adapt tactically to commercial governance and uncertain visibility.

Empirically, the study combines longitudinal participant observation of WATCHA Party sessions and related spin-off activities (August 2022–August 2024) with semi-structured interviews with ten core members, including the community founder, within a broader pool of over one hundred (active core: approximately twenty). Data include session fieldnotes, chat excerpts, and accounts of off-platform coordination. A phenomenological thematic analysis identifies meaning patterns organising synchronous co-viewing—shared temporality, anonymity, and film-mediated dialogue—and links them to collective practices through which participants negotiate platform power and participation.

Findings identify three interrelated practices. First, participants cultivate temporal resistance to skip culture by collectively enduring slow-paced films without fast-forwarding; synchronised viewing and chat restore shared time and transform solitary streaming into a social ritual. Second, members engage in metric-facing coordination through the "Queen Crab" episode: coordinated viewing, rating, and commentary around an obscure B-movie was followed by increased platform visibility (e.g., appearance in WATCHA's "Top 10"), which participants interpreted as fragile leverage over recommendation signals, dependent on opaque metrics and vulnerable to recalibration. Third, the community sustains low-risk micro-public talk enabled by anonymity, using films as shared reference points for discussion of contentious issues (e.g., feminism, refugee rights, and gender identity) without immediate polarisation.

The paper contributes an account of peripheral streaming communities as emergent, modest civic infrastructures. It shows how participants rework rhythms of attention, engage platform metrics, and sustain deliberative talk, while clarifying limits

imposed by commercial governance, metric dependence, and uneven participation. At the same time, it points to fragile but significant pathways towards more inclusive digital futures.

DCC06 Attention Economies and Platformed Cultural Production

PP 0256 "As If" - Attention and Authenticity on Social Media

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Authenticity is widely understood as a master narrative of social media, yet what counts as or feels authentic is not self-evident. On social media, attention often translates into revenue and within this attention economy, projecting authenticity becomes strategically valuable for creators. Relatedly, dominant conceptualizations of the attention-authenticity relationship have largely focused on influencers and content creators, examining how authenticity is produced through frameworks such as contrived authenticity (Abidin 2017) or as authenticity labor (Duffy and Hund 2015). Our presentation approaches the intersection of attention and authenticity from the perspective of everyday users, whose experiences of online authenticity do not sit comfortably within existing conceptualizations of performed or calculated labor practices. Drawing on a meta-ethnographic analysis of selected data from a range of our research projects over the past 13 years (with users of Tumblr, Instagram, Facebook, Etsy and BeReal) we explore how users:

(1) experience and navigate tensions between attention and authenticity, and
(2) describe recurring strategies for reaffirming their sense of authenticity.

We find that these tensions are experienced in multiple ways. Everyday users' social media practices are often shaped by a tacit imperative of attention, where moments of popularity prompt considerations of whether to capitalize on it. At the same time, "attention seeking" has become an internalized judgement. Further, our data reveal how everyday users reaffirm authenticity. We observe this across several recurring registers: love, where intrinsic passion is emphasized; lifestyle, where a particular way of being or social position- often in relation to labor- is foregrounded; and the greater good, where authenticity is grounded in a moral self focused on helping others, offering advice, or publicly diversifying normative discourses.

To theorize these articulations of authenticity, we draw on theories of "as if" idealizations, (Appiah 2017). An "as if" stance allows a perspective that may not be literally true but is pragmatically useful. In dialogue with Appiah, we suggest that registers such as love, lifestyle, and the greater good allow social media users to enact authenticity as if it was real, and as if it was disconnected from the attention economy. This "as if" framework sustains the cultural ideal of being "real" while navigating the contradictions of platform economies that commodify visibility. Through "as if" idealizations, authenticity for everyday users emerges as something that can be constructed or performed while remaining real- or real enough. In this sense, authenticity becomes flexible, without losing its meaning or value, or becoming entirely instrumental.

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DCC06 Attention Economies and Platformed Cultural Production

PP 0257 The business of live-streamed gambling: economic and cultural dimensions of Danish gambling streaming on Twitch and YouTube

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This presentation examines the intersection of digital streaming and online gambling through an in-depth case study of a prominent Danish gambling streamer active on Twitch and YouTube. The streamer regularly broadcasts digital casino games to Danish audiences. Our analysis explores the streamer's content strategies, scheduling practices, monetization models, and partnerships with Danish gambling operators, where we situate these within broader trends of influencer-driven marketing in the online gambling industry (Johnson and Jackson 2025).

The study is motivated by the growing prevalence of gambling among Danish youth (Fynbo et al. 2021; Kirkeby 2025) and the increasing convergence between gaming cultures and societal "gamblification" (Thorhauge 2023; Macey et al. 2025). While prior research has addressed gambling-like mechanisms in games and streaming platforms (Abarbanel and Johnson 2020), few studies have examined the rise of gambling streamers on Twitch, YouTube, and Kick (Johnson & Jackson 2025). This phenomenon is particularly relevant given Twitch's gaming-oriented origins and its evolving role in promoting gambling content to younger audiences (Johnson 2024; Reynolds 2025).

Our case study combines qualitative analysis of streaming performances with a mapping of economic networks, including affiliate links, wagering practices, and parasocial trust-building strategies to show how this type of streaming is "calibrated towards monetization" (Gregersen and Ørmen 2025). By tracing these relationships, we reveal how gambling streamers leverage platform affordances and aspects of influencer culture (Abidin 2017; Maddox 2023) to normalize and monetize gambling. This research contributes to understanding the cultural and economic entanglements between streaming platforms, gambling operators, and influencer-driven business models.

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DCC06 Attention Economies and Platformed Cultural Production

PP 0258 Behind user-generated content: Factors driving digital media production

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This research aims to establish a foundation for understanding the position of creators and their approach to content production in the digital environment. This knowledge is considered a prerequisite for developing a currently non-existent yet highly necessary support system that would prepare and motivate creators to adopt a more adequate sense of responsibility toward their production process and audiences.

More than ever, human experience is mediated by digital tools, materialized in computers, smart devices, and above all mobile phones with various digital media as a part of their regular user experience. User Generated Content (UGC) is what audiences are most frequently exposed to by living technology mediated lives. As all other media content, UGC shapes opinions, complex attitudes, emotions, and influences audience decisions and behaviors. Considering that much power is concentrated in the arms of prosumers (and platforms), it is important to understand what lies behind this content and the editorial and production decisions of digital creators. Namely, to understand the frameworks that determine what UGC will look like, which topics it will address, in what ways, and with what presumed effects.

Aiming to understand what are the key factors influencing digital media production, through theoretical research, conceptual content analysis, and model-building methodology, this study proposes a system of factors that shape digital creators and their content. The proposed system consists of 8 factors- internal (individual moral and ethical code; social class position; demographic characteristics; social and cultural capital, habitus; cultural model affiliation) and external (technological infrastructure; regulatory and normative frameworks; market size and potential). The factors are assumed to determine editorial, thematic, production, and aesthetic components of the content.

After proposing the system, its components, their structure, function, and importance were examined through interviews with ten UGC content creators from the local market (defined by spoken language area), selected so as to adequately represent the local market across different niches and levels of popularity.

DCC06 Attention Economies and Platformed Cultural Production

PP 0259 AI content & platformed cultural production: The case of Suno

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AI content has an increasing influence on how cultural products are created, distributed and consumed across digital platforms. AI content is highly effective to go viral due to its low cost, speedy production and increasingly authentic and hyper realistic features (Stanusch et al. 2025). However, platform companies grapple with the introduction and moderation of AI generated content based on its merits and potential threat for their business models. This paper engages with the question of how AI generated content creates benefits and risks for platform companies. For this, the paper homes in on the case of Suno. Suno is a leading tool for the generation of artificial music and has recently secured a 250-million-dollar investment by venture capital for the extension of their platformed music-ecosystem (Marshall 2025). However, the platform has come under fire as the Danish rights organisation Koda filed a lawsuit against the US based company. Suno has not compensated artists, nor properly disclosed the scope of music data they used to train their generative AI music model. By investigating the case study of Suno, the paper analyses the in-between of profitability and risk for AI content becoming integral part of platformed cultural production.

Theoretically, the paper is situated in scholarship of platform studies and theories on cultural production. The interdisciplinary field of platform studies analyses the ways in which platforms effectively govern cultural production through moderation, policies and algorithmic systems (Caplan & Gillespie 2020; Poell et al. 2022). Theories on cultural production analyse how digitalisation and platformisation impact on cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh 2019; Nieborg 2018; Valtysson 2020) and demonstrate how platforms' business models manage content monetisability (Kaplan & Gillespie 2022; Ørmen & Gregersen 2023; Steinberg et al 2024). Methodologically, the paper applies a critical case study approach (Flyberg 2006), platform analysis (van Dijck 2013; van Dijck et al. 2018) in combination with document and desk research (Bowen 2009) on Suno over the span of three months. The paper argues that new theoretical vocabularies are needed to grasp the dynamics of profitability and risk that AI content plays in the context of platform environments.

DCC07 Internet memes and digital subcultures

PP 0402 "Dank memes with no brakes": Aesthetic judgment and memetic weaponization on r/The_Donald

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Online political extremism is aestheticized through memes as part of a process called memetic weaponization. Thus, memes are instrumentalized for political mobilization, antagonization of political opponents, and normalization of hateful ideologies (Merrill et al., 2024).

Meanwhile, research has shown that online communities rely on taste in memes to develop common aesthetic sensitivities through the interplay between users and platform affordances (Paßmann & Schubert, 2021). Thus, social stratification in *and* between groups and platforms can be constructed. I bring these insights into an overtly political context by asking how aesthetic judgments and collective aesthetic sensibilities shaped memetic weaponization in a far-right meme-centric political online forum in the mid-2010s.

Through a digital ethnographic case study of the infamous and influential pro-Trump political community r/The_Donald, I show how memes functioned as entangled sites of political instrumentalization and aesthetic praise in this digital public during the 2016 US primary and presidential elections. Ultimately, I argue that memes and aesthetic judgments sustained the reactionary political fantasies of this group.

Using the Internet Archive's comprehensive documentation of the subreddit r/The_Donald, I develop this argument through an ethnographic immersion in this community from its inception on June 27, 2015, to the inauguration of Donald Trump as president of the United States on January 20, 2017. This historical focus ensures the stability of my analytical object.

The users of r/The_Donald famously promoted hateful political viewpoints in the form of memes. Methodologically inspired by Literat and van den Berg's ethnographic study of the meme-centric subreddit r/MemeEconomy (2019), I analyze the discourses surrounding memes in r/The_Donald to determine how users related memes to their grassroots support. My analytical focus is therefore on how users spoke about memes, not the memes themselves. I ask how this forum's users' way of speaking of and using memes developed over the period. Moreover, I ask how memes were appraised, and how support for Trump was imagined to be enacted through memes.

I find that the users of r/The_Donald were deeply engaged in creating, sharing, and enjoying so-called 'dank' memes. Pervasive in masculinized meme cultures on Reddit, 4chan, and YouTube in the 2010s, dankness has been described as an ironic, transgressive, and crass aesthetic category undergirded by anti-mainstream sensibilities. Alongside exploiting Reddit's platform affordances, dank memes were seen as an essential political tool of agitation and mobilization on r/The_Donald which the users imagined played a crucial role in the Trump campaign's success. Users collectively invested

dank memes with a promise of political influence, while performances of aesthetic praise supported this fantasy. In sum, I argue that communities engaged in memetic weaponization rely on forming collective taste through aesthetic judgments.

DCC07 Internet memes and digital subcultures

PP 0403 Hyperawareness: memes, legacy media and layered meaning-making processes in the content network of TikTok

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While TikTok can be considered a novel and distinct type of social media, at the same time it serves as an outstanding pathway in the interrelation between 'traditional' legacy audio-visual media, like film and tv, and platformed audio-visual entertainment and communication. First, the platform-inherent memetic and intertextual **content** pieces structurally display hints towards established legacy media texts. May it be politically charged memes or nonsensical 'brain-rot' content, legacy texts feature repeatedly on TikTok via different modalities. Secondly, TikTok's **interface** has repeatedly been compared to legacy media environments, especially those of television, based on its algorithmic structuring, user roles and user agency (Faltesek et al. 2023, Siles & Valerio-Alfaro 2025, Firth & Marinelli 2025). Thirdly, from a **user perspective**, TikTok's memetic and trend-based communication patterns stand out, inviting users to participate in repetitive patterns of content and reference recognition (Zeng et al. 2021, Zulli & Zulli 2022). The participatory co-creation of networked referentiality and cross-media intertextuality enhances processes of de- and encoding (Song 2025).

In this presentation we discuss **the interconnections between legacy media artefacts and their appropriation, circulation and reception on TikTok.** While moving at the intersection of these two well-studied areas, we take a closer look at the different overlapping audio-visual cultures and sketch out audience and user consequences of the emergent necessity to navigate an abundance of options in communication and relation. To empirically explore these connections, we conducted a digital ethnography on TikTok with a hybrid research team consisting of 12 student-researchers and two supervising researchers. Over a period of four months, we collected, analysed and discussed content findings and feed navigation over 7 focus groups. This iterative and layered process of collecting and analysing resulted in two main datasets consisting of 1) videos from the individual users' feeds that reference legacy media artefacts and 2) deductions made from participant's individual and joint analyses of the video collection and group discussion outcomes.

By following and analysing legacy content pieces of remix, participatory and meme culture, we gained insights in the link between legacy media, user culture and reference navigation in TikTok's intertextual structure. This allowed us to uncover individual and collective processes of dealing with affective economies, nostalgia and different modes of participation in online practices of audio-visual culture. Throughout this process, we identified a key concept in contemporary meaning-making which we call **'hyperawareness'** – a mode of navigating the abundance of options in content, meaning and systemic embedment as a platform user, drawing from an intertextual and discursive situatedness. TikTok users showed specific ways of displaying and merging their versatile experiences in being participants of different screen cultures, showcasing a synthetisation of user knowledge about legacy media, meme and fan culture as well as affordance and platform vernacular-driven ways of expression and acquired meta-knowledge about digital environments to different degrees. Participation in meaning-making shows up as a layered, audience-based convergence process between traditional and digital media. Our insights open up conceptual possibilities beyond participatory culture, networked publics and audience studies by merging these fields into complex hybridity.

DCC07 Internet memes and digital subcultures

PP 0404 Navigating censorship through play: Nisu fans and the reconfiguration of digital gender politics

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This study examines the digital subcultural community of nisu fans and investigates how "playful participation" functions as a vital tactic for navigating China's complex landscape of social, cultural, and political constraints. Nisu refers to a fan practice in which predominantly female fans feminise male idols through kinship or romantic address, such as calling an idol "sister" or "wife." Drawing on an eight-month digital ethnography and 45 in-depth interviews, the analysis reveals that nisu fans engage in sophisticated forms of ludic resistance, translating potentially radical gender politics into seemingly innocuous entertainment practices, humour, and memetic creativity. In the Chinese context of stringent media regulation and tightly policed gender norms, the findings show that fans possess a keen sensitivity to prevailing gender expectations while recognising the risks posed by direct confrontation. Within an ecosystem where explicit ideological activism is rarely viable, play becomes a socially permissible vehicle for exploring alternative gender imaginaries without provoking censorship. Through irony, exaggeration, and absurdity, fans create plausible deniability, framing their reworking of the male idol's gendered body as "just for fun" rather than as intentional critique. This dynamic complicates the conventional separation between entertainment and politics in Chinese digital cultures. Here, playfulness operates as a protective aesthetic that

enables fans to articulate dissenting affective positions while remaining publicly legible as recreation. Rather than triggering the suppression associated with explicit activism, playfulness performs a serious cultural function: it transforms the community into a liminal space where political commentary is embedded within the surface of entertainment, and where queer possibilities and gender-norm subversions can be explored under the cover of recreational discourse. The study thus conceptualises nisu fandom as a liminal cultural space in which gendered meanings are reworked under conditions of authoritarian normativity, contributing to broader debates on digital subcultures, feminist media practices, and the subtle forms of agency that emerge within restrictive media ecologies.

DCC07 Internet memes and digital subcultures

PP 0405 "i hate my stupid co-fans": Weibo bot, subcultural politics, and conflictual neo-tribes

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As platform infrastructures increasingly structure cultural participation, fandom—long understood as a central form of subculture—has shifted toward digitally mediated, platform-based practices (Jenkins, 2006; Hills, 2013; Stanfill, 2019). Contemporary fan studies have expanded to address issues such as fan activism, affective economies, digital labor and exploitation, and platform governance and censorship. However, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to the internal differentiation of fandoms: the multiplicity of sub-group identities, their platform-specific organizational forms, and the tensions and conflicts that emerge both within and between fan communities, as well as their entanglements with broader cultural and political dynamics.

This paper addresses this gap by examining transformative fan subcultures on the Chinese social media platform Weibo, with a particular focus on bot accounts as a distinctive organizational form. In contrast to algorithmic bots commonly discussed in studies of political manipulation, market disruption, and misinformation (Ferrara et al., 2016), Weibo bots are typically human-managed accounts that present themselves as automated. Their primary function is to solicit, curate, and repost user submissions under specific thematic frameworks. These bots operate as semi-public, affectively charged spaces that organize fan participation, mediate visibility, and shape collective expression.

Conceptually, the paper draws on post-subcultural theory and Bennett's (1999) notion of neo-tribes to understand bot-centered fan communities as fluid, temporary, and emotionally oriented formations rather than coherent or stable subcultures. Neo-tribalism foregrounds affect, belonging, and collective intensity, offering a useful framework for analyzing contemporary fandom under conditions of platformization. At the same time, this study extends neo-tribal theory by foregrounding conflict, antagonism, and negative affect as constitutive—rather than exceptional—dimensions of neo-tribal relations.

Empirically, the paper analyzes ten Weibo fandom bot accounts between March 2019 and April 2025, based on a corpus of 400 publicly visible posts. Informed by Hughson's (1999) spatial approach to tribes and recent scholarship on the political dimensions of fandom (Huang et al., 2022), a thematic analysis is conducted across four dimensions: digital subcultural organization, content and expressive forms, collective affect, and cultural politics.

The findings suggest that bots function as unstable yet productive spaces through which the "sub-ness" of fan subcultures is preserved in the platform era. While bot culture demonstrates the explanatory power of neo-tribalism in capturing identity fluidity and affective cohesion, it also exposes its limitations. In particular, the analysis highlights how negative emotions, moral antagonisms, and conflictual relations between neo-tribes are vital to the everyday politics of fandom, complicating celebratory accounts of participatory culture and emphasizing the need to take intra-fandom conflict seriously as a form of cultural and political practice.

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DCC08 News, Truth, and Audiences in Digital Cultures

PP 0368 Trust in the news among young audiences in the age of generative AI

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) generated content has flooded the information ecosystem, amplifying concerns of increased misinformation and decreased trust in and engagement with the news. This has impacted audiences' perceptions of trusted sources of news. Public Service Media (PSM), such as the UK's British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), are faced with the challenge of maintaining trust while also informing the public in the context of rapid AI innovation. Since ChatGPT's release

in November 2022, academic attention has focused on how journalists perceive and use generative AI, yet in-depth qualitative studies examining public views of uses of AI in the news, especially the views of young audiences, remain limited. To address this knowledge gap, it is important to examine the perceptions of so-called underserved audiences with methods which enable participants to think critically about generative AI and its effects on the creation and consumption of digital news media.

This paper presents findings from research which investigated how generative AI affects young audiences' trust in the news and how their lived experiences influence their encounters with generative AI and the news. The aim was to identify how these factors affect the trust relationship between the BBC and its young, underserved audiences, a key issue for the broadcaster, which believes low trust impacts engagement with the news.

As trust is a relational concept between trustors and trustees, I conducted 26 semi-structured interviews with 8 BBC staff and 18 young adults aged between 18 and 24 years old. I applied insights from these interviews to design a creative workshop, where 5 young participants used the generative AI tool Google Gemini to simulate how news organisations use AI in news production. This approach enabled an understanding of how young people conceptualise trust and trustworthiness in the context of news consumption.

My fieldwork revealed that audience trust is shaped by both affective and systemic factors. Preliminary findings show that BBC staff tended to have a pragmatic stance towards the use of generative AI, believing that it is here to stay so they must adopt it responsibly in their work to serve the public. Young participants' initial attitudes toward AI in news reporting were marked by scepticism and a keen awareness of bias and misinformation.

Young adults interviewed generally favour the involvement of humans in journalism, regarding automated news production, such as AI anchors or AI-generated summaries, as inauthentic and unnecessary. They also expressed concern that older generations may be susceptible to misinformation and especially vulnerable to the deceptive potential of AI-generated content, as they believe older adults have more difficulty discerning media created with generative AI.

In this paper, I argue that young audiences value transparency and want clear disclosure regarding when AI is used. Significantly, young participants concluded that their trust in news is less affected by journalists' use of AI itself but more so by the transparency with which news organisations disclose such practices.

DCC08 News, Truth, and Audiences in Digital Cultures

PP 0369 Reconsidering impact dimensions of data journalism: Enabling audiences and packaging ideas for sustainable societies in digital circulation cultures

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In his book "Communicating the Future" (2021), political scientist Lance Bennett forcefully advocated a vision of journalistic and political communication to foreground the 'packaging' and 'networking' of progressive ideas into larger narratives about sustainable societies. In this paper, we argue that such a shift in media and communication research needs to address the role and relevance of online communities and the 'circulation of communicative objects' (Authors 2016) to spread such ideas. Following the experience of a "social media infodemic" (Cinelli et al. 2020), and broader perceptions of polarisation and the spread of online misinformation in social media, we argue that data journalism can play a crucial role in facilitating more diverse, inclusive and evidence-based public visions of sustainable societies (Guan & Wang 2024; Tong 2024).

The majority of research on data journalism remains tied to "epistemologies of data journalism" (Ramsälv et al. 2024, Borges-Rey 2020) that focus on industry-specific innovations, products, team compositions and business models (de-Lima-Santos 2023; Ausserhofer et al. 2020; Fan et al. 2025). Diverging from this mainstream research field, we present a prototype study to identify impact dimensions for data journalism projects beyond their initial editorial runtime and context. Based on a review of data journalism research from 2019–2025, we consider four dimensions: 1) the potential of data journalism to foster collaborative community engagement (Aitamurto & Chen 2017); 2) to develop engaging interactive storytelling devices relevant to diverse audiences (Garreton et al 2024), 3) to inspire audience-generated content such as "viral visualisations" (Lee et al. 2021), and 4) to facilitate the long-term capacity-building for data analysis through data journalism projects among civil society actors, journalists and citizens (Dodds et al. 2025). Data journalism as a practice contributes to packaging ideas, analysis and insights about sustainable ways of organising society to wider 'networks of publics' (Bruns 2023) leading to wider public "ramifications" (Hamm 2022).

We conceptually outline a research agenda along these four dimensions based on empirical examples of prominent data journalism projects purposively sampled from award-winning projects of the SIGMA awards for data journalism. We foreground the relevance of collaborative data work and interpretation (Bounegru and Gray 2021) to understand larger shifts within new "social epistemologies" (Godler et al. 2020) that resist authoritative or normative knowledge production processes. Data journalism projects create impacts on several levels, not least around what audiences "experience as informative" (Swart et al. 2022: 16). Along the four dimensions of impact, we question conventional genres of data visualisations (Stalph & Heravi 2021; Cheng et al. 2024) and focus on how data stories instead can "enable users to choose their own story" (Weber et al. 2018: 203). The value of this research emphasises data journalism as a crucial practice for packaging

progressive ideas for wider circulation between author-driven and reader-driven interpretations, "enabling interactive exploration and social sharing" (Segel & Heer 2010: 1146–7). We seek to understand these dynamics from a research and practice-based perspective within digital cultures of circulation.

DCC08 News, Truth, and Audiences in Digital Cultures

PP 0371 Facebook users' reactions to Holocaust-related AI slop: A netnographic study

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Facebook is increasingly flooded with AI-generated content. One of the themes particularly exploited by digital creators using AI-driven automation is the Holocaust. Such content is only loosely based on historical data, and individual profiles publishing this material may post several hundred different items per day. These posts typically consist of an AI-generated illustration, a narrative description also produced by artificial intelligence, and a set of hashtags. The phenomenon is massive in scale and carries serious social consequences. It not only clutters the internet but also contributes to disinformation, distorts historical facts, supports denialist movements, and undermines the authority of historical institutions and Holocaust memorial sites.

This project focuses on how Facebook users respond to such content, which reaches large audiences (a single post from an average profile publishing Holocaust-related AI slop typically receives several hundred reactions and dozens of comments). Through netnographic observation conducted since February 2025, nearly one thousand examples of Holocaust-related AI slop and several thousand user comments were collected.

A preliminary review of the material led to the formulation of several research questions: How do users react to Holocaust-related AI slop? Do they recognize the content as false? Do they attempt to counteract the phenomenon? Do they interact with one another?

The collected material was analyzed, resulting in the identification of several response strategies. Some users lack sufficient digital literacy to distinguish AI slop from historical materials and factual information. They respond empathetically and take what they see at face value. However, there are also groups of users who clearly react negatively to such content and employ various strategies to address the problem—from informing others that the material is AI-generated, to educating them on how to differentiate AI creations from authentic photographs, to providing instructions on how to report and remove such content from Facebook. Another category includes users who openly deny that the Holocaust took place. Additionally, engagement related to criticism of contemporary Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip is visible, ranging from references to human rights violations in Palestine to satirical content directed primarily at Benjamin Netanyahu.

DCC09 Digital Governance and Moderation

PP 0509 Negotiating the Digital Borderlands: Strategic survival, algorithmic evasion, and the negotiation of Chinese K-pop fandom under intensified platform governance

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Early scholarship on online space often framed the digital sphere as a utopian conduit for borderless cultural exchange and democratic expression. However, this techno-optimistic narrative is sharply contested by the lived reality of contemporary Chinese K-pop fandom. This paper challenges such idealistic framings by examining the precarious existence of Chinese K-pop fans who must navigate a digital environment increasingly shaped by geopolitical tension and state intervention.

Since 2016, amid heightened geopolitical tensions between China and South Korea and the informal restrictions on Korean popular culture, Chinese K-pop fans have relied heavily on online platforms to sustain transnational fan practices and subcultural connectivity. However, these digital spaces are far from free or autonomous. In particular, the Chinese state-led Qinglang Campaign in cyberspace launched in 2021 marked a turning point, as fan communities became a central target of intensified platform governance, content moderation, and moral regulation.

Drawing on digital ethnography conducted on Weibo between 2024 and 2026, this research traces a process through which Chinese K-pop fans move from reliance on digital platforms to experiencing intensified surveillance and discipline and ultimately to developing modes of strategic survival within those same spaces. As such, this research sheds new light on how fans strategically reconstruct virtual subcultural spaces to maintain community ties, express individuality, and cope with political pressure.

Moving beyond a binary narrative of oppression versus resistance, this paper highlights the subtle digital interventions and survival strategies employed by fans. It details how fans utilise linguistic encoding, performative nationalism, and algorithmic evasion to bypass censorship and sustain their community. These practices range from displays of nationalism and self-censorship to more nuanced and coded forms of resistance, revealing how fans tactically navigate between state ideology, platform logics, and personal worldviews.

Through an examination of subtle forms of resistance and survival, this study moves beyond viewing Chinese K-pop fandom as mere entertainment or escapism, conceptualising it instead as a dynamic site of negotiation at the intersection of identity, politics, and transnational cultural flows. It argues that the digital landscape of Chinese K-pop fandom is not a "free" zone, but rather a highly politicised environment where cultural expression is inextricably linked to state ideology. Ultimately, this research illuminates how Chinese youth strategically navigate and reshape their digital identities within a mediatised and surveilled society, revealing how transnational popular culture acquires distinct political significance in such contexts.

DCC09 Digital Governance and Moderation

PP 0510 Repackaging Miao (Hmong) traditional medicine on Chinese social media: between indigenous knowledge, algorithmic governance, and medical regulations

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Marginalised within China's formal healthcare hierarchy, Miao (Hmong) ethnomedicine, a knowledge system rooted in oral tradition, is increasingly present on social media. This study investigates how content created by Miao practitioners represents tensions between indigenous knowledge, algorithmic governance, and medical regulations on Douyin (Chinese TikTok). By conceptualising medicinal plants as boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989), the presentation argues that their representations enable a common understanding that brings together cultural tradition, medical regulation, and the digital economy to legitimate and market Miao medicine within a platformised economy.

The data analysed comprises 20 popular Douyin accounts of Miao practitioners over the past 2 years, including 40 of the most-engaged videos and their comments. The content was analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021), supplemented by semiotic analysis (Barthes, 1977) to decode the visuals.

A key finding is that practitioners presented medicinal plants as visual evidence of authenticity by displaying remote mountain landscapes and botanical details. This aestheticization of medicinal herbs allows marginalised knowledge to bypass medical regulation and algorithmic moderation and to establish credibility through sensory immersion. To construct authority, practitioners also employ a dual naming system for medicinal herbs, interrelating folk designations derived from indigenous knowledge with standardised Chinese medicine terminology. This strategy of aligning with national medical standards suggests an effort by practitioners to seek legitimacy within the state's regulatory framework. The visual representation of plants is further complemented by the curated performance of ethnic identity. Practitioners appear in traditional embroidered Miao costumes, often narrating content in a mixture of Miao-accented Mandarin or indigenous dialects. They utilise storytelling to provide historical depth, sharing folk legends about the use of the plants. Visual elements, including macrophotography of herbs and the depiction of the physical labour of herb-gathering, frame knowledge through the lenses of 'nature' and 'tradition'. Furthermore, medicinal plants exhibit significant interpretive flexibility, existing simultaneously as indigenous knowledge, scientific specimens, and health commodities. By drawing on the acknowledged notion of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' (ICH) in Chinese culture, creators successfully establish social credibility for Miao medicine within the boundaries of regulation and algorithms.

Ultimately, the digital culture of Miao medicine represents an active, strategic form of survival, presenting a commercial logic of repackaged ethnic identity and culture (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009) rather than merely preserving tradition. With platform affordances, practitioners transform local herbs into polysemous digital symbols, redrawing the boundaries of the cultural, economic and medicinal landscape. This study deepens understanding of how marginalised knowledge survives and innovates in the algorithmic age, providing empirical findings on the modernisation of ethnic minority medicine and the economic and cultural survival of marginalised communities.

Keywords

Boundary Objects, Algorithmic Governance, Miao Medicine, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ethnic Identity

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DCC09 Digital Governance and Moderation

PP 0511 Anticipatory (non)compliance: How AI streamers monetize the content moderation game

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For social media platforms, content moderation is an "exhausting and unwinnable game" (Gillespie, 2018), necessary to create an environment where users and advertisers want to be. For social media users, the game looks a bit different,

especially for content creators and strategic operatives. For these actors, content moderation becomes a game of adversarial creativity, testing and subverting the boundaries of systems to make money or achieve political goals. The availability of generative AI raises the stakes, providing new tools to both enforce and exploit policies. While there is growing research on how creators integrate generative AI tools (e.g., Lyu et al., 2024) and the challenges of moderating synthetic content (e.g., Moreno, 2024), AI agents on social media introduce unique complications, bringing the content moderation of chatbots into the highly public, participatory, and often antagonistic context of social media.

To investigate how AI agents navigate content moderation, we turn to the environment where the challenges are most acute: livestreaming. Because livestreaming involves real-time interactions between a streamer and a chatting crowd, centralized platform moderation tools struggle to keep up. As a result, platforms typically delegate the responsibility for moderating to streamers. We focus on the case of Neuro-sama, the most-subscribed streamer on Twitch, who also happens to be an LLM-powered chatbot (Hale, 2026).

We gathered media coverage about Neuro-sama, resulting in a collection of 64 news articles. We also collected every thread in r/LivestreamFail, a subreddit dedicated to documenting noteworthy moments from livestreamers, about Neuro-sama (n = 108), which typically included a video clip followed by a discussion among fans and anti-fans. We then read through all of the material, watched all attached clips, and identified patterns related to practices of content moderation and fan reactions—interpreted through our background familiarity with the streamer community formed from observing Neuro-sama's livestreams and reading the dedicated fan wiki.

We map the different sites of content moderation in AI streaming, including the moderation of what an LLM-powered agent can say, what the live captions of her speech will show, what the audience can write in the chat or "say" through paid text-to-speech features, and the other media integrated into the stream. The challenges of content moderation are complicated by streaming on multiple platforms, especially when they operate under very different regulatory environments like US-based Twitch and China-based Bilibili. Perhaps the bigger challenge comes from the antagonism of the chat, who enjoy making the robot (who appears as an innocent anime-style girl) say bad things. Neuro-sama's rise to fame was boosted by her early ban on Twitch for, reportedly, denying the holocaust, following in an ignoble chatbot tradition set by Microsoft's Tay (Hallinan, 2019). Almost all of her high-profile moments depict edgy behavior. We argue that the creator of Neuro-sama has effectively gamified content moderation, programming anticipatory (non)compliance into the virtual agent, balancing the need to engage the audience and appease multiple platforms. We conclude with a discussion of what AI streamers tell us about the future of platform governance in the creator economy.

DCC09 Digital Governance and Moderation

PP 0512 Noting Community Notes: A quantitative audit of X's soft content moderation system

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While Community Notes style soft moderation approaches are heralded by some politicians and tech executives as a means to harness the 'wisdom of the crowds' to collectively fact check, contextualise disputed information, and moderate content, there is evidence that these programs are overall insufficient and particularly vulnerable to failure when addressing divisive topics. Despite these issues, X, TikTok, and Meta have all either publicly announced or already adopted Community Notes style programs, which has led to several investigations and inquiries by the European Commission.

In this presentation, we share insights from an audit of X's Community Notes based on a public dataset of approximately 1.4 million English language notes proposed between January 2021 and November 2025. We conducted both a quantitative and textual analysis of this dataset, particularly focusing on author activity, the diversity of topics they covered, and the overall engagement with the program. This involved using the state-of-the-art topic modelling package BERTopic to analyse the content of the notes and comparing contributor engagement with various topics over time. The aim of this study was to test the efficacy, sustainability, and functionality of the Community Notes program as it played out on an increasingly polarized platform.

This study is ongoing; however, our initial findings have revealed a decreasing retention rate of contributors to the Community Notes program, correlating with a significant decline in the creation of new Notes in 2025. The presentation will provide further insights into the temporal dynamics of which Notes are deemed helpful, unhelpful, or yet to receive a rating. Our study raises important questions about the efficacy and sustainability of crowd-sourced and algorithmic approaches to content moderation while providing insight into the emergence of novel vernacular verification models. Our presentation offers a critical contribution to the emerging debates around Community Notes, highlighting how the model blurs the line between user participation and platform control over digital communication during a period of heightened polarization and political upheaval.

DCC10 Activism and Political Life on Digital Platforms

PP 0479 Sabotage as resistance: Analysing the Telegram presence and practices of grassroots sabotage groups in Russia's war against Ukraine

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Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, sabotage as constitutive to hybrid warfare has become more widespread in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Europe at large. Sabotage has been used to attack the Crimean Bridge in Ukraine's Crimea, temporarily occupied by Russia, to disrupt Baltic Sea submarine cables in the EU, or to damage and burn Russian and Belarusian locomotives carrying arms and military equipment.

Sabotage practices can therefore be used as a war tactic and as a means to influence and spread fear and insecurity. Yet they can also be understood as practices of resistance against occupying forces and their supply chains by those being invaded or those opposing the aggressor. We build on Aizman's (2024) theorising of sabotage as an assemblage of cultural-discursive representation and material-physical practices. We also reckon with the use of digital media practices by sabotage actors resisting military aggression to manage their 'strategic visibility' (Pearce et al., 2018) in the context of resistance.

Digital media platforms, including Telegram, have been used as tools for the recruitment and grassroots organisation of potential saboteurs. In our paper, we focus on articulations of sabotage as a resistance practice aimed at destabilising occupying forces. Using a selection of channels from the Telegram Archive of War curated by the Center for Urban History in Lviv, we empirically analyse three sabotage groups from Ukraine and Russia that resist Russian aggression. Specifically, we analyse and compare their establishment and vernacular practices in Telegram's digital spaces, the various ways these groups conceptualise sabotage and explain their positionality, as well as the affective dimension of their practices. Methodologically, we carry out codebook-based collaborative content analysis using rich textual descriptions and take special caution in anonymising content from the Telegram channels. Our initial findings point to diverse vernacular and affective digital cultures as well as multiple layers of sabotage metaphorisation. With our research, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding and conceptualisation of sabotage as a resistance practice that takes shape on digital platforms and how knowledge about the practices and affective metaphors of sabotage is generated, articulated and shared in these communities.

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DCC10 Activism and Political Life on Digital Platforms

PP 0480 Imaginaries of nature and environmental futures in TikTok activism

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In the context of the project *Opening up the Future: Emerging Imaginaries of Nature amid the Climate and Environmental Crisis*, this presentation includes preliminary results from the social media strand of the research. More specifically, we examine the imaginaries of nature (Castoriadis, 1987) circulating on TikTok within the current context of the climate crisis.

Using a digital ethnography approach (Pink et al., 2016), the study explores how content creators—particularly Indigenous activists from the Global South—articulate narratives and imaginaries about nature, territory, and environmental futures.

The methodology includes 17 interviews with TikTok content creators from Mexico, Spain, Brazil, Panama, and Ecuador, alongside a qualitative analysis of 60 accounts, with attention to visual narratives, content, and recurring iconographic motifs (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). For the purpose of this presentation, we focus on six Indigenous activists based in Ecuador (in the Amazon and the Andean highlands) whom we have interviewed. Drawing on current research on environmental activism on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok (San Cornelio et al., 2024; Hautea et al., 2021; León & Erviti, 2021), our research questions address the specificity of Indigenous activists' content and the imaginaries they promote.

Preliminary findings show that Indigenous activists produce distinct imaginaries in which nature is neither contemplative (e.g., romantic landscapes or images of pristine nature) nor extractive (e.g., through energetic resources or technological transformation). Instead, nature is presented and performed as a lived, worked, and relational space tied to territorial and community struggles. Visual tropes such as the canoe frame (a typical subjective point-of-view shot) or the use of the first

person in voice-overs (reinforcing the idea that "nature speaks") strengthen this ontological connection, resonating with Indigenous epistemologies that challenge the modern Western nature/culture divide (Latour, 1993). These representations invert dominant values in Western environmental imaginaries and open a promising line of theorisation.

At the same time, our analysis questions the applicability of playful activism (Cervi & Divon, 2023; Ardèvol et al., 2010) to Indigenous creators. While playful strategies are common among non-Indigenous TikTokers, Indigenous activists tend to produce more grounded, non-ludic narratives aligned with community-based struggles and long-standing community media traditions. These findings invite further exploration of how such imaginaries persist or transform across platforms like Instagram and how they may contribute to broader public awareness of environmental issues.

DCC10 Activism and Political Life on Digital Platforms

PP 0481 YouTubers as agents of political socialisation: A large-scale computational analysis of thematic communities

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Political socialisation-the process by which individuals acquire political values and perceptions (Ohme & de Vreese, 2020)-is increasingly mediated by social media and the influence of content creators (Jakubowski, 2021). Previous scholarship shows that political influencers (content creators specialising in political content) are perceived by young audiences as authentic and reliable sources (Cheng et al., 2024), utilising affective and informal communication styles to foster political engagement (Schmuck et al., 2022; Zimmerman et al., 2023). However, the mechanisms through which political discourse is integrated into ostensibly "non-political" entertainment channels remain under-researched, representing a critical gap in our understanding of the political socialisation of young audiences.

This study seeks to identify and map the presence of political themes and their connections to seemingly non-political issues (such as gaming, sports, or fashion) among Spain's most prominent YouTubers. By employing a network-based approach to topic modelling, we describe the formation of "thematic communities" in the Spanish YouTube landscape and observe the presence and role of politics within these communities.

Methodologically, this research adopts computational methods to analyse a dataset of 59,321 videos published in 2024 by the 381 most followed Spanish YouTubers. We processed video transcripts using the BERTopic language model to detect latent topics and identified thematic co-occurrences to define communities. This large-scale automated content analysis allows for a macro-level mapping of the YouTube ecosystem that fills a significant gap in existing scholarship.

The results reveal a substantial presence of political topics -particularly concerning international conflicts and Spanish domestic policy- competing for attention alongside entertainment staples like gaming or celebrity news. Crucially, while direct thematic overlap is sometimes limited, the study identifies "node YouTubers" who connect non-political content communities with political ones. These creators facilitate a "gateway effect", linking apolitical entertainment communities to more polarised political spheres. In conclusion, YouTube emerges as a space for political socialisation where entertainment YouTubers may function as gateways to more explicitly political accounts and content.

DCC10 Activism and Political Life on Digital Platforms

PP 0482 A Culture War Scandal: Mapping complexity in the case of Claudine Gay

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After more than a year of intense political debates, activist campaigning, and much-publicized investigations into several perceived transgressions, Claudine Gay resigned her position as the 30th President of Harvard University in January 2024. This paper maps the cultural and political complexity of the scandalization process leading up to Gay's resignation, focusing on the interplay between news media, social media audiences, and various scandal entrepreneurs in co-creating scandal narratives across media (see Pozner and Hanigan, 2023). Inspired by Zulli's notion of "socio-mediated scandals" (2023), we analyze the discursive and affective intertwining of three levels of scandalization: "the 'context' scandal," "the university scandal," and "the plagiarism scandal."

Through a quantitative analysis of 238 conversations posted across 101 Reddit communities, we categorize narrative themes to map the overlapping levels of scandalization. This is followed by qualitative close readings of the top 200 comments across the top 10 conversations, examining how diverse audience segments negotiate "the scandalous" and verbalize different moral positionings in the multilayered "scandal compound." The analysis is guided by the following research question:

RQ: How is the complexity of the Claudine Gay scandal negotiated across different institutional domains, and how do Reddit audiences co-construct the scandalization process in their responses to scandal actors' engagement with and news stories about the case?

First, the analysis shows how the scandal was about Gay's alleged plagiarism, a disqualifying transgression of academic standards, framing the case as a "classical" scandal (see Thompson, 2000), progressing in routinized ways and involving the usual scandal actors (Grafström and Windell, 2017). Second, the case was also about Gay's initial failure to condemn antisemitism following Hamas' terrorist attack on 7 October 2023; her perceived status as a representative of contested diversity, equity, and inclusion policies; and the broader political role of Harvard in US society. Add to this the context of polarization related to Donald Trump's presidency, competing economic interests in higher education, race relations, free speech, and a year-long culture war between "wokes" and "anti-wokes" (see Johansen, 2025).

Adopting a culture-oriented approach to complexity theory (see Cairney, 2012), we develop a three-step analytical framework centered on the domains, actors, and positions involved in the scandal. The paper contributes with new empirical knowledge to the fields of scandal and culture war research and adds to the conceptual discussion about complex socio-mediated scandals.

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DCC10 Activism and Political Life on Digital Platforms

PP 0483 From negative to positive adoption: The Kosher phone as a new phase of religion-social shaping of technology

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This study suggests the emergence of a new stage in the relationship between a closed ultra-Orthodox community, seeking to differentiate itself from the general population, and information and communication technologies (ICTs). Existing scholarship on the intricate relationship between devout religious communities and digital media has advanced diverse theoretical perspectives, ranging from resistance and hermeneutics of suspicion to the mutual process of adoption and adaptation. Building on the framework of religious-social shaping of technology, the study explores the transition from *negative adoption*, defined by restriction and domestication, to *positive adoption*, in which the already domesticated technology sustains distinct cultural boundaries and becomes an identity marker and moral symbol.

Focusing on the Israeli Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) community, this research examines the "kosher phone," a mobile device designed by rabbinical leadership to limit connectivity and prevent uses deemed inappropriate or spiritually harmful. Unlike former communication technologies, the cell phone and later the smartphone pose a more acute challenge to the Haredi way of life due to their extensive functionality, portability, personal nature, and concealability. The Kosher phone is not merely a simple technological artifact, but a complex socio-technical assemblage shaped by individual, communal, commercial, and state actors. It embodies the community's innovative effort to reconfigure modern communication technologies to serve collective moral objectives while preserving social boundaries.

The study employs in-depth interviews with kosher phone users from both genders across the three principal Haredi subgroups in Israel. The qualitative, bottom-up approach captures the everyday practices and meanings associated with the use of this cultured technology, two decades after inception and institutionalization, as well as users' interpretations of its social and ideological functions.

Findings reveal considerable heterogeneity in practices, reflecting a dynamic interplay between restriction and adaptation. Two main strategies have emerged. The first involves using technology itself to navigate or overcome affordance limitations, for example, converting written messages into voice messages or using curated app stores and dedicated operating systems. The second strategy relies on negotiated intra-communal agreements that delineate normative boundaries and create social workarounds to balance religious observance with practical needs. Despite such adaptations, user attitudes show near-consensus support for the kosher phone system, underscoring its necessity and legitimacy.

Beyond its ideological and functional roles, the kosher phone has acquired deep symbolic meaning as an identity marker, signalling levels of religious observance, communal affiliation, and adherence to moral norms. Patterns of use reveal an

internal hierarchy in which specific devices correspond to social status and eligibility for communal privileges. By tracing and providing a rich account of these processes, the study contributes to existing theories by identifying a new phase in the relationship between religion and technology. This phase is characterized by the transformation of communication technologies from a perceived threat that needs to be modified and shaped to a positive instrument of communal collective self-definition and moral distinction vis-à-vis secular society.

DCC11 Disinformation as Affective Competition: Expanding Mediatization Theory in Deeply Digital Cultures

PN 56 Unpacking strategic approaches to spreading disinformation in Russian propaganda

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During Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, hybrid propaganda has functioned not merely as a collection of false claims but as a systemic form of narrative warfare, embedded in contemporary media infrastructures and platform dynamics. This contribution problematises the very idea of "unpacking" hybrid propaganda, arguing that analytical approaches focused on discrete campaigns or isolated messages fail to capture how propaganda operates as a sustained communicative practice aimed at controlling interpretative and affective conditions of public discourse (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018; Krotz, 2014). From the perspective of strategic narrative theory, contemporary conflicts are fought not only over territory but over meaning, legitimacy, and moral positioning (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin & Roselle, 2017). In this context, Russian propaganda should be understood as a struggle over communicative disposition rather than factual dominance (Paul & Matthews, 2016; Bjola & Pamment, 2019). Influence is exerted less through persuasion or truth claims than through the capacity to structure emotional alignment, temporal attention, and moral judgement across fragmented media environments (Papacharissi, 2015; Hjarvard, 2013).Within this logic, disinformation functions as a performative weapon. Fake narratives are not primarily designed to be believed, but to generate noise, ambiguity, and emotional overload that degrade sense-making itself (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Bennett & Livingston, 2018). The coexistence of contradictory claims, partial truths, and fabricated content creates a communicative environment in which verification loses stabilising power and interpretative fatigue sets in (Venturini et al., 2018; Pomerantsev, 2019). Crucially, this noise is not accidental but systematically produced and strategically maintained. Empirically, the study examines six recurring disinformation themes promoted between February 2022 and February 2023: denial of Russian war crimes in Bucha; dehumanisation of Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced persons; allegations of selling Ukrainian children to paedophiles or organ traffickers; claims of destroying Western weapons in Ukraine; accusations of Ukrainian resale of allied military aid; and speculation about President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's illness. Rather than functioning as separate campaigns, these themes operate as interconnected nodes within a broader dramaturgy of propaganda, activated in waves and synchronised with political events and calendar cycles to maintain affective intensity. The contribution argues for the need to develop a research framework for analysing affective battles between narratives as a continuous strategic activity rather than a sequence of episodic interventions. Three key challenges emerge. For quantitative research, the difficulty lies in operationalising noise, affect, and performativity beyond metrics of reach or virality. For qualitative research, the challenge is to avoid over-interpreting coherence where fragmentation itself is strategic. For mixed-method approaches, the central task is integrating scale with interpretative depth without reproducing the fragmentation imposed by propaganda. Addressing these challenges is essential for understanding hybrid propaganda as a systemic practice of mediated conflict rather than as a set of isolated disinformation events.

DCC11 Disinformation as Affective Competition: Expanding Mediatization Theory in Deeply Digital Cultures

PN 57 Does the war take place at all? Baudrillard essays revisited, or war images viewed through the lenses of the semiotics of internet

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Does the war take place at all? Baudrillard essays revisited, or war images viewed through the lenses of the semiotics of InternetAt a certain speed, the speed of light, you lose even your shadow. At a certain speed, the speed of information, things lose their sense.(Baudrillard 1995)In his three essays about the mediatised images of war, published in 1991 in Liberation and The Guardian (that later came to be the book La guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu, 1991, English transl. 1995), Jean Baudrillard analyses contemporary war as a media event; something that people observe as a stream of bits of footage, sanitized news briefings, and carefully structured narratives and controlled information; that is designed to be consumed rather than experienced. For the public, a war then becomes a simulation, or even a simulacrum, as the comprehensibility of those bits of footage and narratives is based on the viewer's previous engagement with fictitious depictions of war, such as films, TV series, and games. The politics of war journalists and public relations specialists is then structured not around the realistic depiction of battle, or atrocities, or humanitarian crises, but around perception. The overabundance and acceleration of the creation of images and bits of information turn war into hyperreality and commodify it as the material

to be reproduced, packaged, sold, resold, etc. This makes it impossible to have a real, possibly complete understanding of the war situation. What's worse, it precludes empathy. Baudrillard's essays, focused on war in the press and television, have been later recalled in the analyses of the media representation strategies of other conflicts and humanitarian crises, albeit in a rather essayist way. This presentation will be an attempt to re-interpret Baudrillard's analysis in terms of the semiotics of interactive media. Based on the images of war in Ukraine, author tries, in a disciplined, methodic way, to analyse how the depictions of war in the social media differ from the television stream, and how semiotic particularities of multimodal interactive stream of semiotic material (fragmentation, velocity, out-of-contextedness, heightened modality, unclear provenience and ontological status etc.) shape the contemporary "Ukrainian war that does not take place".

DCC11 Disinformation as Affective Competition: Expanding Mediatization Theory in Deeply Digital Cultures

PN 58 Situational Ethics of Resilience in Wartime: Transforming Ethical Paradigms and Journalistic Practices in Ukraine's Frontline Cities

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This paper shows transformative processes in contemporary media ethics and professional journalistic practices under the conditions of full-scale war, focusing on journalists working in Ukraine's frontline cities. Central to the analysis is the concept of media resilience, understood as the capacity of a media system to adapt, maintain functionality, and preserve ethical integrity amid extreme circumstances characterized by permanent security threats, limited resources, and intensified information warfare. The research argues that traditional ethical principles of journalism—such as balance, objectivity, and depersonalization—are undergoing critical re-evaluation in the context of an existential threat to national security. Journalists operating in frontline environments face distinct ethical dilemmas that challenge conventional professional norms. These include the need to balance informational transparency with operational security; to navigate between documenting war crimes and protecting traumatized local communities; and to reconcile professional detachment with civic responsibility and personal involvement in the fate of their cities and audiences. An analysis of the functioning of the media system under wartime conditions reveals the emergence of a new ethical paradigm that can be described as "situational ethics of resilience." This paradigm integrates classical journalistic standards with heightened contextual sensitivity to the realities of war, resulting in hybrid models of responsibility. Among the key features of this shift are the strengthening of collective forms of ethical decision-making within newsrooms, the development of adaptive verification protocols in response to coordinated disinformation campaigns, and the institutionalization of trauma-informed approaches to reporting on socially significant events during wartime. A particularly illustrative example of this transformation is the observable shift away from the strict enforcement of objectivity as a dominant norm, toward prioritizing the prevention of re-traumatization of media subjects. This is especially evident in coverage involving civilians who have suffered physical or psychological trauma following shelling of residential areas by the aggressor. In such cases, ethical judgment increasingly favors care, dignity, and harm reduction over formal neutrality. The findings suggest that media resilience should not be understood as a form of passive adaptation to crisis conditions. Rather, it represents an active process of reconfiguring professional identity, ethical frameworks, and organizational structures. Frontline media outlets—most notably those operating in the city of Kharkiv—demonstrate a capacity for innovative reinterpretation of foundational journalistic principles while maintaining a strong commitment to accuracy, transparency, and public service. Future research may explore how the wartime experience of Ukrainian media can contribute to global debates on the boundaries of media ethics in authoritarian and conflict-affected contexts. Such insights may support the development of more nuanced, context-sensitive ethical frameworks for crisis journalism in the era of hybrid warfare and digital disinformation.

DCC12 AI in Work and Practice

PP 0586 Thrown between awe and frustration: The feel of GenAI in the everyday work of Swedish software engineers

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The landscape of work is evolving at a rapid pace, not least through breakthroughs in Generative AI (GenAI). This is particularly apparent for web and software engineering, at the forefront of digitalization, and the adoption of AI technologies, to the point that it is argued these technologies are redefining the roles of software developers. However, GenAI is not just another technological tool. The inherent feedback loop, its aim to be responsive, and its conversational character push users towards making relationships with GenAI. Some describe GenAI as conversational agents. This implies more social and emotional experiences with GenAIs compared to other tech tools used in working life. This study zooms in on Swedish software developers' stories about, experiences and feelings working with GenAIs.

This study contributes by going beyond a strict separation between man (worker) vs. the machine. GenAI is not an autonomous force but is taking shape in the way GenAI tools are felt and the way stories are told about them. This is about

recognizing GenAIs' relational and dynamic nature, and about highlighting the often invisible, multifaceted, and interrelated labour through which GenAIs are sustained and made meaningful. The analytical framework is centred around theories of dwelling, folk theories, and feelings. Ingold's (2000) "dwelling" perspective is helpful as it underlines humans' (in this case, Swedish software engineers) interconnectedness with their environment, as active participants living and moving within an unfolding (work) landscape. Folk theories help people navigate and reason about technologies and make sense of and learn about the world. Emotions and bodily feelings are also important for this. Ruckenstein (2023) underlines in her book (from which I have borrowed the title) that we get to know, in her case, algorithms, not only by telling stories about them, but also by feeling their actions. Studying how GenAIs are felt becomes an important source to understand GenAI relationships and how software engineers dwell with their GenAIs at work.

Methodologically, the study is based on interviews (individual and in groups) that are currently ongoing (to be finalized during February 2026). Preliminary results suggest folk theories around GenAIs inevitability, especially for software engineers. Participants seem thrown (in a Heideggerian understanding) into GenAI relationships at work, having to navigate largely unknown waters. Beyond the immediate folk theories of GenAI being great, the future, and that you need to "jump on the GenAI bandwagon", the stories that emerge in interviews are that GenAI is, in general, unknown, uncertain, and most of all, unreliable. This, in turn, leads to mixed feelings of being thrown between awe and frustration: awe when new smart tools and functions are introduced, frustration when the GenAI hallucinates or does not really get what the software engineer is after. At the time of the Ecrea conference, this study will have been finalized, and final results will be ready for presentation.

DCC12 AI in Work and Practice

PP 0587 Generative AI in university teaching: Critical reflections from an autoethnographic case study

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Generative artificial intelligence is increasingly reshaping educational practices, raising critical sociological questions about knowledge production, professional agency, and the redistribution of power within digitally mediated learning environments. This paper presents a qualitative case study examining the educational use of ChatGPT (versions 4.0 to 5.2) during a year-long experimentation conducted between February and December 2025 at the University of Turin. The study was embedded in an institutional pilot in which the platform was provided free of charge to a group of university educators and administrative staff, with the explicit aim of supporting a structured pathway of experimentation in academic work.

The paper focuses on a single, in-depth case: the author's sustained and reflexive use of ChatGPT across teaching, assessment design, academic writing, and pedagogical reflection. From a sociological perspective, generative AI is conceptualized not merely as a neutral technological tool but as a socio-technical actor embedded in everyday academic practices - one that contributes to shaping norms, routines, and forms of authority, while reconfiguring academic labour and subtly automating forms of judgement, as highlighted in critical scholarship on digital education (Selwyn).

Methodologically, the research combines autoethnography with a qualitative analysis of platform-generated content. The autoethnographic component documents the author's situated experience of interacting with the system over time, capturing moments of appropriation, negotiation, and resistance as generative AI becomes integrated into routine academic tasks. This narrative is complemented by an analysis of prompts, outputs, conversational trajectories, and system affordances, with particular attention to advanced features such as Projects, integrated data analysis tools, and Deep Research. These functionalities are examined as infrastructures of knowledge mediation that both support scholarly inquiry and contribute to processes of datafication and epistemic standardization.

The findings reveal a set of ambivalent dynamics. On the one hand, ChatGPT emerges as a resource for supporting reflective teaching practices, scaffolding complex concepts, and enabling exploratory and dialogic engagement with knowledge. On the other hand, the study identifies critical issues that resonate with Selwyn's notion of a "hidden curriculum" of educational technologies: epistemic opacity, normalization of dominant academic discourses, intensification rather than reduction of academic work, and the risk of over-reliance on platform-generated syntheses. These dynamics reflect broader processes of platformization in higher education, in which pedagogical and research practices become increasingly entangled with proprietary digital infrastructures.

Looking toward future uses, the paper argues that generative AI may play a constructive role in higher education only if embedded within critically informed pedagogical frameworks that foreground transparency, reflexivity, and human responsibility. Rather than replacing educators' expertise, AI systems should be approached as objects of inquiry and negotiation, capable of fostering critical digital literacy and awareness of algorithmic mediation. By foregrounding a situated case study conducted at the University of Turin, the contribution underscores the value of qualitative, experience-based research for anticipating both the risks and the transformative potential of generative AI in academic contexts.

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DCC12 AI in Work and Practice

PP 0588 Reconfiguring internationalisation: AI-mediated virtual exchange and intercultural learning in European higher education

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The internationalisation of higher education has traditionally privileged physical mobility as the primary mechanism for intercultural learning, yet economic constraints, visa restrictions, and geopolitical instability systematically exclude significant student populations from these experiences. While artificial intelligence (AI) promises to democratise international education through real-time translation and AI-facilitated collaboration, empirical evidence on whether these tools cultivate intercultural competencies remains scarce. This study investigates how students and faculty experience AI-mediated virtual exchange compared to physical mobility, and what forms of intercultural learning are enabled or foreclosed through technological mediation.

Drawing on a mixed-methods design, this study examines virtual exchange initiatives at four Central and Eastern European universities integrating AI-powered collaboration tools. Data collection comprises semi-structured interviews with approximately 30 students and 10 faculty members, complemented by student reflection portfolios and platform interaction logs. The analytical framework integrates mediatization theory with Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence, enabling examination of both mediation processes and specific competency dimensions affected. Preliminary findings reveal a productive tension. AI tools demonstrably reduce participation barriers: students from lower-income backgrounds report meaningful international engagement previously inaccessible to them, and language anxiety appears significantly diminished. However, algorithmic translation tends to 'flatten' cultural nuance—colloquialisms and implicit references are frequently misrendered, leading participants to describe interactions as "efficient but shallow." Most significantly, the study identifies "competence asymmetry": while knowledge dimensions of intercultural competence appear well-supported, attitudinal dimensions—particularly tolerance of ambiguity—show limited development compared to physical exchange.

These findings challenge both techno-optimist narratives positioning AI as a solution to mobility inequities and pessimist framings dismissing virtual exchange as inferior. This paper argues for a complementarity model: AI-mediated internationalisation can supplement physical mobility but requires intentional pedagogical design to counteract inherent limitations. The study proposes design principles that deliberately incorporate ambiguity and unstructured interaction. For the CEE context, where outbound mobility remains economically constrained, thoughtful AI integration represents both opportunity and responsibility.

DCC12 AI in Work and Practice

PP 0589 Faster, better, fairer: How is fairness conceptualised by AI job interviewing platforms?

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Artificial intelligence (AI) supported job interviewing presents itself as a new mainstream solution in the human resources (HR) industry. One-sided structured behavioural interviews are recorded in front of a computer camera and analysed by an AI system that generates assessments and rankings on which human recruiters can base further decisions. Given the ubiquity of job interviews and the time, cost, and effort going into them, their automation has disruptive potential; but the technology has also been publicly criticised for a lack of accuracy and potentially producing biased results [1][2]. Since AI systems depend on human input, they can reproduce existing biases and automate them, potentially perpetuating job market discrimination toward different groups [3][4]. The term *AI fairness* describes statistical methods intended to mitigate or eliminate these kinds of biases; fairness concerns linked to the development and use of automated interviewing have been discussed from ethical and legal perspectives [5].

This qualitative contribution analyses how automated interviewing companies communicate their commitment to AI fairness to the public with the aim of assessing how the concept is framed, both to attract paying customers and to mitigate concerns by applicants and the wider public – how and to what extent is the term *fairness* used? How does its framing relate to operationalisations in the available literature on AI ethics?

Based on an initial mapping of 50 companies offering AI-assisted HR technology, the websites of 20 selected video interviewing companies were analysed in-depth to assess how the businesses conceptualise AI fairness and related terminology. Three distinct types of communication strategies were identified: Companies that 1) focus on the comparison between prejudiced human recruiters and supposedly neutral, objective algorithms, 2) emphasise that while AI in general can be biased, theirs is not due to e.g. rigorous debiasing, and 3) underline that combining human and artificial intelligence can tackle fairness concerns best. These conceptualisations have different shortcomings, such as neglecting the well-documented incidences of biased AI outputs, overstating of the effectiveness of technical debiasing methods, or making single human actors responsible for detecting and combating instances of discrimination.

In a further step, a quantitative corpus analysis is currently being conducted on more publicly available material published by the same companies (e.g., blog posts, white papers) to systematically identify larger linguistic patterns and provide empirical grounding to the qualitative assessment. This analysis will be completed at the time of the conference.

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DCC12 AI in Work and Practice

PP 0590 Astrology with DeepSeek: Data disclosure, playful labour, and emotional bonds in AI-mediated divination

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Large language models are increasingly entangled with vernacular spiritual practices. On Xiaohongshu (RedNote), a popular Chinese lifestyle platform, thousands of user-generated posts demonstrate how to prompt DeepSeek, an OpenAI-based chatbot, to perform astrology readings from birth data. These posts circulate step-by-step instructions ("enter your birth hour, ask about your past life"), accompanied by screenshots of personalised readings and comment threads filled with intimate life stories. While users are aware that inputting such sensitive, biographical information raises ethical concerns, they remain eager to engage in these AI-mediated divination practices. To address this paradox, our paper argues that such practices legitimate the extraction of users' personal data under the guise of playful AI-driven astrology. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on how generative AI is appropriated, normalised, and moralised within everyday digital cultures.

While recent scholarship has begun to examine the circulation of astrology content on Chinese platforms such as Douyin, this body of work has primarily focused on *viewership practices* rather than the *disclosure of personal information to generative AI chatbots*. For instance, Zhang and Wang's (2025) study of astrology videos on Douyin argues that astrology content enables users to make sense of their identities and relationships. Drawing on sensemaking theory, they demonstrate how astrology on social media shapes personal self-concepts and intimacy. Yet, what remains underexplored is how the rise of generative AI reconfigures this terrain: when users input highly personal and biographical data into chatbots such as DeepSeek, they not only consume astrological content but also participate in new forms of datafied labour and expose themselves to networked privacy risks.

Our study examines how and why users disclose personal data when engaging with AI-mediated astrology. We adopted a qualitative approach combining content analysis and semi-structured interviews. First, we assembled a corpus of publicly visible Xiaohongshu (RedNote) posts and comments by searching keywords such as "DeepSeek 算命" (DeepSeek fortune-telling), "占卜 prompt," "星盘 AI," and "八字 指令." Second, we conducted semi-structured interviews with Xiaohongshu users who had engaged in AI astrology, focusing on their motivations, perceptions of accuracy, and awareness of privacy risks. Triangulating these two sources allows us to show not only how disclosure practices unfold on the platform, but also why users rationalise and normalise the sharing of intimate data with AI chatbots.

Our findings reveal a paradox at the heart of AI-mediated divination: although many acknowledge the risks of inputting sensitive information, they are drawn to the promise of personalised cosmic insight. Crucially, our interviews show that users turn to AI not only for astrological accuracy but also for *emotional refuge*. Many described AI as a safer, more reliable confidant than friends, emphasising its non-judgmental and always-available qualities. This affective bond helps explain why users normalise the disclosure of personal data despite privacy concerns. We argue that playful AI astrology naturalises data extraction while deepening user–AI emotional attachments in everyday digital cultures.

DCC13 Digital Intimacy and Trust

PP 0727 Presence, pleasure, and power: The social construction of intimacy in VR pornography consumption

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Background

Virtual reality (VR) pornography is increasingly integrated into the broader online porn ecology, yet empirical research has only begun to examine how its immersive affordances may affect users' understandings of intimacy and sexual interaction.

Existing work on pornography shows that sexually explicit media can contribute to the acquisition and reinforcement of sexual scripts: the culturally shared norms that structure expectations during sexual interactions (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Quantitative studies document associations between pornography use and attitudes regarding gender roles, objectification, and sexual performance, particularly among adolescents and emerging adults (Vandenbosch & van Oosten, 2017; Wright, 2014). However, this research has focused almost exclusively on two-dimensional (2D) pornography, leaving largely unexplored how the heightened immersion and presence (see also Fox et al., 2009) characteristic of VR pornography modulate sexual scripts around intimacy, emotional connection, and consent (Evans, 2021).

Aim

The current study integrates Uses & Gratifications (U&G) and Sexual Script Theory (SST) to examine how emerging adults make sense of intimacy in VR pornography. U&G theory understands media users as active agents who selectively use media to satisfy cognitive, affective, social, and escapist needs (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000). In parallel, SST conceptualizes sexuality as socially scripted across cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Combining these perspectives allows the study to map out why emerging adults turn to VR pornography, and how this may shape their intimacy-related perceptions. As such, the study addresses three central questions, corresponding to presence, pleasure, and power: (1) Which gratifications do young people report seeking and experiencing in VR pornography, and how do these compare to those associated with traditional 2D pornography? (2) How do young people describe and interpret intimacy, realism, emotional closeness, and relational dynamics (e.g., consent) within VR pornographic scenarios? (3) How do young people reflect on, negotiate, or distance themselves from intimacy-related scripts encountered in VR pornography when discussing their sexual self-understandings and relationships? Rather than testing direct effects, this study focuses on how users experience and interpret VR pornography as an intermediate step in sexual socialization (see also Valkenburg & Peter, 2013).

Method

The study will involve 15–20 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with emerging adults (18–29) who have experience with VR pornography. The interview protocol will include comparisons with offline intimacy and traditional 2D pornography. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis in Nvivo, with explicit attention to the three levels of scripts (cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic) and to how VR-specific affordances (i.e., immersion and presence) shape these levels. Ethical safeguards include clearance by our internal ethical committee, informed consent, protection of confidentiality, and procedures for managing discomfort, in line with current recommendations for research on pornography exposure (cf. Owens et al., 2012; Wright, 2014). By foregrounding users' meaning-making, the project advances theoretical understanding of how VR pornography participates in contemporary sexual socialization. It will refine SST for the context of immersive media and generate empirically grounded insights for porn literacy education and broader discussions of sexual ethics in an era of increasingly immersive sexual media.

Results

Will be presented at the conference.

DCC13 Digital Intimacy and Trust

PP 0728 Beyond missed connections: loneliness narratives in the companion robot industry

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Loneliness is commonly and repeatedly defined as a problem to be managed, and each redefinition promotes certain solutions while overlooking deeper structural causes. The contribution of this article is to examine how the social and communicative robot industry participates in this process by framing loneliness as a communication deficit that human-machine communication (HMC) can mitigate. We ask: What values and promises underpin the social and communicative robot industry's efforts to mitigate loneliness through HMC, and how are its promises of companionship made meaningful and legitimate across representational, production, consumption, identity, and regulatory practices?

For this purpose we combined a problematization-oriented approach (Bacchi, 2009), with the circuit of culture framework (du Gay et al., 1997), treating companion robots as communicative artefacts whose meanings are produced across connected sites. We conducted a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) across two interconnected industry settings. First, we analysed 42 company-published online materials (2020–2025)—including website pages, marketing materials, and privacy policies—using a frame-informed qualitative content analysis. The materials were drawn from three companies and their associated product websites operating in the United States (California and Rhode Island) and Europe (Netherlands). Second, we extended the analysis through participant observation at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES 2026). We followed live product demonstrations and the surrounding information exchange between exhibitors, industry attendees, and media, to trace how loneliness-mitigation narratives are collectively assembled and circulated.

We contribute to digital culture and communication research by examining how technology-oriented efforts to mitigate loneliness are made meaningful and legitimate through industry narratives and practices. Across the circuit of culture, we show how the companion robot industry reconfigures loneliness by framing it as a communication deficit. This entails

redefining norms of intimacy, while reorganising the politics of care through datafied, market-oriented arrangements of inclusion. In this way, the industry constructs loneliness as governable through communicative imaginaries of companionship—promoting technologically mediated futures of connection.

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DCC13 Digital Intimacy and Trust

PP 0729 Feeling the algorithm: Affective engagement with datafication in dating apps

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This work examined how dating app users perceive and engage with datafication processes that structure contemporary intimate life. Dating apps have become central infrastructures of mediated intimacy, converting personal and behavioural data into quantifiable inputs that shape visibility, desirability, and matching outcomes (De Ridder, 2022). In a broader "datafied society" (Couldry & Mejias, 2019), where platforms govern everyday interactions, dating is no exception. While studies have documented the opacity of algorithmic systems (Bucher, 2017) and the rationalisation of romance in digital culture (Illouz, 2019), less attention has been given to how users themselves interpret, feel, and navigate data practices in their daily engagement with dating apps.

This study examined datification in dating apps from a user perspective. For that, a mixed-methods approach was followed, combining an online survey (n = 679; female = 339; heterosexual = 546; Portuguese) with semi-structured interviews (n = 19; ages 24–54; male = 10; Portuguese) with (past) dating app users, both conducted in 2025. Quantitative analysis focused on self-datafication practices, while interviews were thematically analysed (Braun & Clark, 2020) to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of datafication in intimate contexts. Survey participants, 38% (n = 258) reported engaging in practices associated with self-datafication, including counting dates (79.1%), counting matches (73.1%), tracking message response rhythms (70.5%), monitoring app usage time (66.4%), and strategically adjusting their profiles to improve performance (62.3%). Interview analysis revealed four main dimensions of how users perceive and engage with datafication: 1) Data collection awareness: while participants acknowledged that dating apps "collect information," most had limited knowledge of the personal and behavioural data collected; 2) Algorithmic opacity. Participants described the system as a "black box," yet continually attempted to interpret perceived visibility patterns and ranking mechanisms; 3) Strategic self-management emerged as a pragmatic response to uncertainty results, with users curating profiles, adapting swiping patterns, timing interactions, and reshaping their self-presentation according to what they believed algorithms rewarded, and 4) Affective impact. Users associated datafied outcomes (e.g., matches, likes, dates) with emotions ranging from anxiety, frustration, and comparison to validation and perceived efficiency.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that datafication functions not only as a technical infrastructure but as an affective condition shaping contemporary intimate life. Metrics operate less as neutral indicators and more as emotional signals through which users interpret desirability, visibility, and relational potential. Rather than engaging with datafication cognitively, users navigate algorithmic opacity through affective interpretation, translating uncertain, data-driven cues into emotional meaning and adapting their behaviour accordingly.

Contributing to discussions of digital culture and intimacy, the study shows that datafication functions not only as a technical infrastructure but also as an affective condition that shapes intimate life, in which emotions and metrics intertwine. Relational value is assessed through datafied cues. This work expands the understanding of mediated intimacy by revealing how users domesticate opaque systems and incorporate datafied feedback into the negotiation of self-presentation, desirability, and connection.

DCC13 Digital Intimacy and Trust

PP 0730 'Hi mum, hi dad': The ideal victim of frauds on smartphones

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The types of fraud using social engineering to exploit asymmetries in digital literacy and trust of consumers are on the rise, as are the occurrences across countries. Besides phishing and cyberattacks, frauds involving mobile phones, social media or digital money services include smishing (SMS), spoofing (email) and vishing (calls); these frauds represent small to large financial losses to consumers but amount to a volume crime (small losses to a large number of victims), only

sometimes covered by insurance. Cybersecurity authorities, telecommunication operators, the financial sector and other stakeholders are taking action through awareness-raising campaigns for consumers, changes in encrypted services, and passing legislation to protect consumers.

Media coverage often refers to these frauds as 'scams' which in turn might downplay the severity of the practices and hinder reporting (Carter et al., 2025). Moreover, it tends to depict victims as gullible and impulsive, ultimately blaming them for the crime (Cross, 2015). Besides financial loss, psychological harms may occur, but they have been considerably less studied (Ha, 2025). Victims have mental, social and physical needs that need to be attended to when recovering from the incident.

This study forms the basis for a larger project, interested in understanding profiles of vulnerability, the efficacy of different forms of support (technical, social, psychological), and the support that should be recommended and offered to victims. It adopts a socioconstructivist perspective that builds on criminology to understand the complexity of the phenomenon and offer insights to build a better ecology of services and restore trust and safety for users. Specifically, this paper analyses news on the press and television about fraud involving smartphones, social media, digital money services and online shopping between consumers (such as circular economy apps), in Portugal, between mid-2024 and mid-2026. We use frame analysis (Kitzinger, 2007) to identify the framing of the problem, of victims and perpetrators, other agents represented, and solutions.

Preliminary findings point to the leveraging of literacy and cautionary behavior as the individual's responsibility, even when frauds mobilise close interpersonal and family-based relations of trust. In turn, perpetrators are represented as resourceful, financially-driven criminals, feeding on technological, regulatory and relational vulnerabilities of the digital ecosystem. While technological measures are listed for restoration after the incident, there is less focus on social or psychological support, and on the importance of reporting.

DCC13 Digital Intimacy and Trust

PP 0731 Technology perception across generations. A comparative overview of grandparents and grandchildren

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With rapid digitalization, understanding age-related differences in technology perception and acceptance has become increasingly important (Sun et al., 2025). Situated at the intersection of population aging and digitalization, elderly are particularly vulnerable to digital exclusion manifested through social marginalization and technology-related anxiety (Ge et al., 2025). Recent scholarship highlights that contemporary digital inequalities are shaped less by access and more by disparities in digital skills, confidence, social support, and technology meaningfulness (Failli & Arpino, 2025; Mirazchiyski, 2025; Miller et al., 2024).

The present study comparatively examines how emerging adults and older adults perceive contemporary technologies within broader socialization and life-course contexts, addressing gaps in prior research that has largely relied on quantitative surveys, focused on single technologies, and overlooked intergenerational family dynamic (Kim & Choudhury, 2020). A total of N = 380 semi-structured interviews were conducted, comprising 190 ageing adults, ranged from 60 to 89 years (M = 65.55, SD = 5.694), and 190 emerging adults, ranged from 18 to 26 years (M = 19.57, SD = 1.381), recruited in intergenerational dyads (one young participant and one senior member from the same family). Interviews address actual technology use, attitudes, perceived usefulness and ease of use, trustworthiness, emotional responses, perceived challenges, the role of family and community in adoption processes, and behavioral intention.

Main findings indicate a clear generational divide in technology perception. Elderly perceive technology as useful yet challenging and engage with it selectively, often relying on family support, whereas emerging adults view technology as intuitive and indispensable, fully integrating it into daily life. Both groups express ambivalence, with older adults emphasizing usability and trust concerns and younger adults highlighting risks related to dependency, time management, and digital overexposure. The study highlights the need for age- and life-course–sensitive technology strategies that leverage intergenerational support while addressing distinct concerns of older and younger users.

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DCC14 Influencers, Content Creators, and Platform Labour

PP 0703 Granfluencers in the spanish-speaking world: Algorithmic agency, expressive labour and age politics across TikTok, Instagram and YouTube

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The rise of granfluencers-creators over 65 with significant visibility on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube- offers an illuminating perspective on how digital culture reshapes later life. Their presence challenges longstanding assumptions about older adults' roles in digital environments, showing that ageing is not incompatible with creativity, visibility or technological engagement. Recent scholarship indicates that their positive portrayals do not arise spontaneously: they are shaped by algorithmic systems that reward humour, emotional clarity and recognisable forms of authenticity. Participation in social networks also strengthens relational well-being, reduces isolation and fosters a renewed sense of personal agency. At the same time, emerging research frames their practices as expressive labour, highlighting the emotional and aesthetic work required to sustain visibility in attention-driven environments. This study examines the content of six Spanish-speaking granfluencers identified through an exploratory mapping of 36 profiles. A total of 290 videos published between 2023 and 2025 were analysed. The research design combines a systematic literature review (2013–2024) with multimodal qualitative analysis informed by seven recurring themes in existing studies: self-representation, ageism, gender, senior marketing, entertainment, everyday activities and health or emotions. These themes were examined in relation to the specific affordances and performative expectations of TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, allowing us to understand how older adults adapt their narratives to each platform's conditions for visibility. The findings reveal that granfluencers produce alternative imaginaries of ageing while navigating infrastructures that distribute attention unequally. On TikTok, humour, rapid pacing and easily repeatable formats help reframe age-related vulnerability, but they also require alignment with algorithmic logics structured around virality and emotional immediacy. Instagram emphasises aesthetic self-presentation and everyday routines, which become spaces for connection, taste-making and affective curation. YouTube, with its longer forms, enables more sustained storytelling, intergenerational teaching and reflections on identity, though it also demands greater technical competence and persistence. Gender emerges as a central axis of negotiation. Some older women articulate forms of sexual agency and playful desire that challenge deeply rooted assumptions about later-life asexuality, while others reproduce domestic or caregiving roles historically associated with ageing femininity. These representations coexist and often collide, illustrating the complexity of ageing identities in digital spaces. Involvement in senior marketing campaigns introduces further ambivalence: granfluencers gain visibility and recognition, yet they also become targets of commercial appropriation that narrows the spectrum of what ageing can look like. Overall, the study shows that granfluencers reinterpret digital citizenship in later life as a combination of creativity, learning and algorithmic negotiation. Their practices encourage a broader public conversation on ageing, visibility and technological participation, opening new avenues for research on aesthetics, affect and power at the intersection of platforms and older adulthood.

DCC14 Influencers, Content Creators, and Platform Labour

PP 0704 Mainstreaming anti-gender: Female influencers and politicians, social media and anti-gender rhetoric

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The anti-gender discourse in Central and Eastern Europe has increasingly been the subject of research across various disciplines, including media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies (Smrdelj and Kuhar 2025). Most research focuses on far-right political actors and their use of anti-gender rhetoric as a political strategy to attract voters and form coalitions across the conservative political spectrum (Kováts, 2015; Bracewell, 2021; Lewis, 2018; Svatoňová, 2020, among others). At the same time, research in anthropology and cultural studies has also dealt with how the anti-gender strategies have been incorporated into lifestyle content on social media, by conservative influencers as well as everyday users (Lewis 2018; Heřmanová 2022; Baker 2022, among others).

The presented paper attempts to combine these two approaches using a case study from the Czech Republic. Building on data from a larger research project that maps anti-gender discourses across the Czech online space, it identifies main actors with large social media followings that engage with anti-gender discourse in various ways, both professional politicians, pundits, and experts on the one hand, as well as lifestyle influencers, gurus, and coaches on the other, focusing on female actors specifically. Using a range of qualitative methods, including netnography (Kozinets 2021), relational ethnography

(Desmond 2014), and qualitative content analysis, it maps how anti-gender discourse is translated from political to lifestyle spaces and how its content changes in the process.

The preliminary results of the analysis uncover several observations: 1) while the overtly political spaces and lifestyle spaces appear to be separate from the outside, there are overlaps in the type of content that is shared. For example, some female conservative politicians engage with different platforms differently, posting campaign-related content on X and lifestyle content on Instagram. 2) While lifestyle influencers often engage with content that copies the political messages posted by politicians and activists, only very rarely do they express overtly political opinions and support for political candidates or parties. In this sense, the crossover of lifestyle and political content, as seen, for example, in the U.S. tradwife movement (Sykes and Hopner, 2024), does not have a direct counterpart in the Czech space. 3) The issue of migration, connected to Islamophobic content, is often used as a way to connect a political message to a lifestyle concern (for example, how the presence of muslim men in European countries will impact the everyday lives of women). This shows that various conservative anti-discourses interact with each other in the online space.

The aim of the paper is to offer insight into the process of mainstreaming anti-gender discourses from overtly political online spaces to semi-closed, female-led and oriented lifestyle spaces by focusing on concrete online personalities and their content strategies.

DCC14 Influencers, Content Creators, and Platform Labour

PP 0705 #GlowUp Futures: How YouTube Creators Construct Imaginaries of Individual Transformation for Women

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Public discourse in many Western societies is increasingly shaped by pessimistic assessments of the future (Gallup 2025; Stiftung für Zukunftsfragen 2025). Ongoing geopolitical conflicts, climate crisis, economic insecurity, demographic change, and uncertainties around artificial intelligence contribute to a sense of collective instability and diminishing future horizons. At the same time, digital platforms host a rapidly growing body of aspirational media that foregrounds individual improvement, self-optimisation, and personal transformation.

This presentation examines aspirational YouTube videos that explicitly target women and circulate under labels such as #glowup, “be unrecognizable” in a given time frame, or “level up”. These videos go surface-level lifestyle optimization. They promise profound transformation through changes in appearance, mindset, routines, and self-discipline, framing success, confidence, and social recognition as attainable outcomes of individual effort. Against the backdrop of widespread uncertainty, such content offers seemingly clear and actionable paths toward desirable futures, relocating questions of security, stability, and fulfilment to the level of the self.

Conceptually, the presentation draws on debates of the imaginary (Jasanoff 2015) ,future thinking (Oomen et al. 2022) and media of aspiration (Fran & Tania 2016) to analyse how platformed content constructs future-oriented imaginaries in times of crisis. It asks:

How do aspirational YouTube videos targeting women construct desirable futures and promise individual transformation in times of social and economic uncertainty?

In addressing this question, the proposed presentation focuses on the narratives of success that are mobilised, the promises attached to personal change, and the strategies of self-work presented as legitimate pathways toward a “better” future. Particulr attention is paid to the gendered dimensions of these imaginaries, including norms of femininity, productivity, emotional regulation, and visibility.

Empirically, the study is based on an in-depth qualitative content analysis of a curated sample of 15 popular YouTube videos addressing female audiences (theoretical sampling). The analysis examines narrative structures, recurring motifs, and the articulation of transformation as both a moral and temporal project. A central preliminary finding is that content creators position themselves as living proof of the strategies they promote. Through autobiographical storytelling and recurring before-and-after visuals, creators present their own transformation as evidence that aspirational futures are achievable through disciplined self-work. In this way, transformation is rendered visible, measurable, and seemingly reproducible.

The presentation argues that aspirational YouTube videos function as a central medium through which future-oriented imaginaries are articulated. They reorient future-oriented thinking away from collective and structural conditions and reshape how futures are imagined and made actionable as well as embodied. Moreover, they bring imagined futures into the present as well as offering examples ‘success’ as demonstrated by the content creators. These videos therefore contribute to the reconfiguration of futures on shifting social and economic ground, promoting personalised and actionable paths of aspiration in an era marked by uncertainty and instability.

DCC14 Influencers, Content Creators, and Platform Labour

PP 0706 The vanillization of social media content: How platform economies shape creative expression

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Through interviews with 30 content creators in Spain and Switzerland, and an examination of social media content in both countries, this research identifies an emerging phenomenon of "vanilla content"—deliberately sanitized material designed to avoid algorithmic penalties and audience controversy at the expense of authentic self-expression. This research aligns with previous arguments about the difficulty to monetize certain identities as a creator (Glatt, 2023) and it illustrates how, rather than negotiating a balance between authenticity and commerciality (Arriagada & Bishop, 2021), creators increasingly turn to homogenization as a survival strategy, prioritizing financial stability and mental well-being over genuine expression.

This "vanillization" process follows three key patterns. First, creators select universally palatable topics and genres to maximize acceptability. As José, a Spanish comedy influencer, explicitly described his strategic approach: "my content is very white (...) I don't do much black content." When asked whether white content referred to race, he clarified: "White content is fine. It's things like not swearing in videos or getting into, for example, black humour (...) and where you don't discuss politics (...) I also avoid discussing my preferred soccer team." Second, creators systematically avoid political and controversial issues, even when central to their identities or interests. As Mackenzie, a lifestyle influencer in Switzerland, explained: "I usually don't post about political things. Because there's always different opinions, and you don't want to ever offend anyone with your opinion." This self-censorship extends even to creators with political training and interests, who consciously suppress their expertise to maintain platform viability. Rachel, a music influencer in Switzerland with a background in international relations, articulated this tension: "I haven't, but only also on purpose, because before my actual university, I did international relations. So I wanted to be a diplomat (...) and there we learned to be, especially in social media, unless it is something really strong, I try not to be opinionated in that sense. Not that I don't have my opinion, but I know for social media it's something that in the moment, even if you do your own interpretation, it can come out wrong." Third, creators strategically sanitize their outsider status—for instance, self-branding as an "expat" rather than "migrant" to sidestep controversy.

While women and racialized creators with intersecting identities face disproportionate pressure from platform algorithms and monetization systems, the phenomenon extends across demographics. The quotes above illustrate how creators from non-marginalized backgrounds also internalize platform logics, actively policing their own content to avoid controversy.

These practices expose the hidden "conformity labor" required for platform success: constant monitoring and sanitizing of content to fit algorithmic preferences that privilege whiteness, apoliticality, and commercial safety. This dynamic represents a significant expansion of digital censorship beyond the overt content moderation documented in previous research (Gillespie, 2018), revealing how social media platforms regulate race, identity, and expression through economic pressure rather than explicit removal. Though some creators devise resistance strategies, the pervasiveness of vanilla content fundamentally reshapes the boundaries of acceptable online expression, creating a homogenized digital landscape where controversy of any kind becomes economically untenable.

DCC15 Digital Health and Wellness

PP 0834 Weight loss drugs and off-label use in the digital discourse: A survey study on social media engagement, perceptions, and health attitudes

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Weight loss management has long been a subject of societal debates, also on social media (SM). Recently, the topic has gained renewed attention due to a "breakthrough" (Couzin-Frankel, 2023) in obesity treatment: Originally developed for the treatment of type 2 diabetes, medications like *Ozempic* showed weight-reducing effects and are increasingly used off-label for weight management, sparking public interest (Han et al., 2023). Discourse around these drugs includes both positive evaluations of medical benefits and criticism related to thin ideals and diet culture (example: Rosin, 09/23/2023, *The Atlantic*).

On SM, appearance-focused drug use is also widely discussed, turning off-label use into a viral trend (Basch et al., 2023). We therefore examine who is exposed to (RQ1) and who engages with (RQ2) related content.

Content analytical data highlights an overrepresentation of weight loss success stories, disseminated by non-medical accounts on SM (Basch et al., 2023; Fong et al., 2024). Yet, content analysis cannot capture perceived exposure since SM feeds are personalized and algorithmically curated. Consequently, we also assess what sources (RQ3a) and subtopics (RQ3b) SM users encounter in SM-postings related to weight loss drugs. We are further interested in how SM users perceive the tone of the discourse, e.g., along dimensions such as ualong dimensions such as good–bad, harmless–dangerous (RQ4a), and in factors influencing these evaluations (RQ4b).

Finally, previous studies suggest that the information quality on the topic is relatively low on SM (e.g., Basch et al., 2023). Consequently, we examine how SM use (i.e., exposure, engagement) and psychosocial factors (e.g., thin-ideal internalization, appearance comparison, self-esteem) may influence attitudes (RQ5a) and intentions (RQ5b) toward off-label drug use for weight management.

Methods

We conducted a survey among a quota-sample (quotation criteria: age, gender, living region in Germany). A polling institute recruited a sample of N = 1,195 German Internet users (M_{age} = 42.7 years, SD = 13.4; 50.3% female) in August/September 2025. Whenever possible, we adapted established scales which showed good reliabilities (Cronbach's α > .800).

Preliminary Results

In total, n = 121 participants (10.1%) reported personal use of *Ozempic*: 3% for diabetes, 7% for weight loss. About 30% of participants reported knowing someone who uses Ozempic for weight loss (family members, friends/colleagues, celebrities/influencers).

More than 50% of SM users have encountered content on weight loss drugs online (RQ1a). The topic was most prevalent on *Instagram*, followed by *TikTok* (RQ1b). However, engagement with related content is rather low (RQ2). Users mostly came across Ozempic-related content posted by journalistic outlets or ordinary users rather than by accounts of medical professionals (RQ3a). The most frequently perceived subtopic was "weight loss, success stories and before-and-after comparisons" (RQ3b). The SM discourse is perceived mainly favorable, especially regarding valence, usefulness, and desirability (RQ4a). Attitudes toward off-label use score slightly below the midpoint of the scale (RQ5a), whereas intentions to use such medication off-label are relatively low albeit with considerable variation (RQ5b). Further analyses, particularly the regression analyses addressing RQ2, RQ4b, and RQ5, will be presented at ECREA'26.

In addition to addressing limitations and practical implications for health professionals, we will discuss the findings from various perspectives, including socio-cultural theory.

DCC15 Digital Health and Wellness

PP 0835 Muscles, yoga mats, and medical gowns: Social media constructions of health expertise and epistemic authority

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For the last decades it has been a rising trend that an increasing number of people seek out health information online. Research has shown that information found on the internet can exert a significant influence on health beliefs, health behaviors, and decisions regarding healthcare seeking (Chen et al., 2018; Tan and Goonawardene, 2017). While social media simplifies access to relevant and helpful information in many ways, it is also identified as a considerable source of health misinformation (Wang et al., 2019; Broniatowski et al., 2018).

For individuals, the question of which sources to trust is intimately connected to perceptions of expertise and epistemic authority, as research in STS has shown for many years (Turner 2003; Shapin 2004). People looking for health information on social media are confronted with a vast variety of actors claiming expertise on multiple grounds, competing with one another for the audience's attention (Beguerisse-Díaz et al. 2017). This contribution examines how health expertise and epistemic authority are communicatively constructed and negotiated by content creators and their audiences on social media. To do so, this research combines insights into both the perspective of platform users as well as content creators.

Concretely, this research analyzed the user experiences of 40 young adults (18–35 years) in Austria, in the form of 36 participants autoethnographies and 4 interviews, as well as the corresponding media content that the users provided via links, screenshots and-recordings. Further, the user perspective was complemented by data gathered through 14 in-depth interviews with health-related content creators from Austria and Germany active on YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. This sample of creators was composed based on the content shared by the users and therefore mirrors the variety present in their data.

The findings show that users indeed encounter a variety of communicative constructions of authoritative health-related knowledge stemming from diverse content creator types like health professionals, lifestyle influencers, and personally affected laypeople. However, stylistically the media productions of these ideal types are often not as distinct as one might think, sharing characteristics, blending aesthetics and adopting practices from one another. Users assess their trustworthiness situationally by weighing credentials, legitimacy within the platform community, as well as perceptions of professionalism and authenticity.

Conversely, the health creators strategically manage their image to align with audience expectations: those with institutional legitimacy (e.g. doctors and nurses) tend to choose a casual, spontaneous appearance to seem more authentic and relatable, while less credentialed creators adopt medical symbolism (e.g.. anatomical models or screenshots of scientific studies) and polished, "professional" aesthetics to enhance credibility and visibility. The interviews showed that beyond

their claims to advanced health knowledge most of the creators also drew from prior professional training in media, marketing and/or communications for their trust-building efforts.

DCC15 Digital Health and Wellness

PP 0836 Liberal optimism as the successful code of eating disorder recovery influpeers: Hybridisation of commercial appeal and biomedical and platform 'safety'

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The popularity of social media influencers has given rise to 'influencer creep' (Bishop, 2025), content creators from political activists to artists emulating practices, such as personal branding, commercialisation and authenticity. Drawing on sociological and communications research on (mental) health peer support (e.g. McCosker, 2018) and influencer culture (e.g. Abidin, 2021), we examine their hybridisation (see Chadwick, 2017) into influpeers, which have not been investigated before. Our research question is: How does hybridisation shape influpeers' content and how does it develop over time?

We identified 14 popular (between 10K and 1 million followers) eating disorder (ED) recovery influpeers; half were mentioned in interviews with people with EDs, the other half sampled from the networks of the original sample, adding a few to enhance e.g. ethnic diversity. We analysed a selection of most popular content across Instagram, TikTok and YouTube at specific timepoints between 2020–2025. The content was analysed using multimodal discursive thematic analysis.

We identified a spectrum of hybridisation from influ*peers* (displaying mainly personal recovery content) to *influ*peers (displaying branded content on e.g. body positivity and feminism) and influpropeers (mainly marketing their own services/products, such as one-to-one ED coaching and nutrition and fitness apps).

Content mostly conformed to a 'liberal optimistic' code, which combined influencer culture's aspirational positivity and peer support's focus on helpful and safe advice. The code visualised therapeutic and pop psychological trends, such as self-compassion ('don't be critical of yourself' with images of caressing one's bigger body), intuitive eating ('allow yourself to eat when hungry' with images of eating spaghetti and meatballs or lecturing on the topic on camera) and celebrated recovery (with 'before and after' ED images). However, especially influ*peers* intermittently posted about relapse, depression, suicidal thoughts, chronic EDs and criticism of poor treatment, sharing negative experiences and criticism of healthcare, the subversive aspects of peer support.

Some of the 'negative' and critical content was taken down by platforms and some later restored. Some influpeers encouraged audiences to unfollow fellow recovery influencers if they 'trigger' them. Some influpropeers attacked other online ED coaches and apps for marketing fitness and diet plans as ED support. *Influ*peers attacked 'reactionary' female influencers (#tradwives), male trolls as well as followers, who criticised them for bragging about themselves and no longer being relatable, noting they should celebrate other women's success. The liberal, optimistic code was thus policed by platforms and influpeers themselves both in relation to insiders and outsiders.

Over time influ*peers* often sought to develop into *influ*peers, but after they recovered from an acute ED, their content could lose its focus or brand and become close to everyday social media posting on holidays and going for a run. A handful of influ*peers*/*influ*peers, who displayed affinities to non-conformist, such as post-punk, subcultures, neurodiversity and moodiness, maintained a niche popularity. The liberal optimistic code was most successful across time in terms of rising engagement and enterprise, as it hybridised the commercial appeal of influencer culture and the biomedical and platform ideal of safety often subscribed to by peer support.

DCC15 Digital Health and Wellness

PP 0837 Experimental investigation of uncertainty-identity dynamics in audiences of ethnic-based cyberhate: The role of anonymity and discussion norms

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Online news with discussions often expose audiences to hostile intergroup content and cyberhate, yet little is known about how individual and contextual factors shape audience responses to this content. Drawing on Uncertainty-Identity Theory (Hogg, 2007; Hogg et al., 2007), this pre-registered study examined how different domains of self-uncertainty and online contextual features influence audience responses to ethnic-based cyberhate in online news with discussions.

Using a multiple-message experimental design, we investigated a mediation model in which group identification with other commenting users (representing ingroup members) mediated the relationship between self-uncertainty and perceived threat of cyberhate targeting an ethnic outgroup. As a key contribution, we distinguished three types of self-uncertainty: individual self-uncertainty and two distinct dimensions of social self-uncertainty (related to national identity and national membership), rarely examined jointly in prior research. Technical platform anonymity (anonymous vs. non-anonymous discussion platform) and discussion norms (aggressive vs. no dominant norm) were manipulated as contextual moderators.

Additional exploratory analyses further examined perceived anonymity of users in discussions (supplementing the measurement of technical platform anonymity) and audiences' behavioural intentions (helpful, harmful, or passive) following their exposure to cyberhate in news. Data from 935 Czech adults (49.3% women) aged 18–38 in 2025 were collected online.

The hypothesised mediation model linking self-uncertainty, group identification, and perceived cyberhate threat was not supported. Individual self-uncertainty showed no significant effects. In contrast, social self-uncertainty played a central role in shaping both perceived cyberhate threat and behavioural intentions, with its two dimensions (identity, membership) showing distinct patterns. People who were uncertain about their national identity perceived the witnessed outgroup cyberhate as more threatening. At the same time, this form of uncertainty was linked to a greater likelihood of either remaining passive or engaging in harmful behavioural intentions (e.g., writing hateful comments). Uncertainty about national group membership did not affect perceived cyberhate threat. However, it was linked to both types of active behavioural intentions – harmful and helpful (e.g., writing supportive comments).

Our investigation of the contextual factors (platform anonymity and discussion norms) showed they had no direct effects. However, exploratory analyses indicated that perceived anonymity, rather than mere technical platform anonymity, played a role in shaping responses to cyberhate as it moderated the relationship between social self-uncertainties and group identification. When other users were perceived as less anonymous (i.e., more identifiable), uncertainty about national group membership strengthened identification with the discussion users.

To summarise, our findings offer several important insights. First, they demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between individual and social domains of self-uncertainty when examining audience responses to ethnic-based cyberhate. Second, they underscore that identity and membership self-uncertainties related to national identity show distinct patterns and should be considered separately when investigating such audience responses to cyberhate. Finally, the findings highlight the significance of perceived anonymity as a contextual factor that goes beyond technical platform anonymity. Based on these findings, important implications for Uncertainty–Identity Theory and its application to cyberhate research will be discussed.

DCC16 Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban and Its International Repercussions

PN 73 Banning technology or banning children? Why bans are against children's rights

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Global reporting of the Australian social media ban led to numerous headlines about "banning children …" Though the Online Safety Amendment Act 2024 prioritises restrictions on companies, the public felt the burden of compliance and enforcement to fall less on companies than on children. Informed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), this paper will set out the case that social media bans, such as smartphone bans at school and screen time restrictions at home, are not only poor "solutions" to genuine problems, but they are also problematic in conceptual and normative terms, leaving it unclear what is wrong, what would be better, and what interventions would be preferable. In 2021, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted General comment No. 25 on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment, setting out in internationally authoritative terms how the full range of children's rights applies in a digital world, and the steps to be taken by governments, businesses and other relevant actors to realise these rights. Viewed through a child rights lens, social media bans are problematic for at least four main reasons:

- By addressing child protection to the neglect of child expression and participation, access to information, and privacy (through the national reliance on age assurance mechanisms), they fail to recognise that children's rights, as for all human rights instruments, are indivisible and interdependent, and should not be ranked, cherry-picked or traded off against each other. Instead, international law requires that, in the face of strong evidence of risks of harm to children from the use of social media, a best interests determination should be made that carefully weighs policy alternatives to evaluate their intended and likely unintended consequences for all children's rights.
- By not consulting children, whose views on bans are complex, contextual and generally critical, these policies infringe the most hotly-fought over article in the UNCRC, namely Article 12, the right for children to be heard – in ways that are consequential- on matters that affect them, as bans clearly do.
- By imposing a blanket policy on all children, bans neglect children's diverse needs and circumstances, including their evolving capacities, and the ways that the costs of bans likely fall unequally, as well as the host of needs and rights infringed as collateral damage, from vulnerable teens seeking peer support to young human rights defenders exercising their democratic voice.
- By introducing a policy that, many have argued, is likely to be insufficient or flawed in practice, bans miss the opportunity to deploy a host of tried-and-tested tools and processes of child-rights and human-rights assessment and due diligence widely recognised by states, businesses and civil society. While the aim of the paper is to establish 'what good looks like', we can conclude by noting the global pushback against human rights, especially in relation to the digital environment. In such circumstances, children are among the many losers.

DCC16 Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban and Its International Repercussions

PN 74 "Trapping water with a net" and "hitting the mosquito with a hammer": Young Australians' perspectives on the social media minimum age legislation

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Australia's Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act commonly referred to as the "under 16s social media ban" came into effect in December 2025 with minimal input from young people into the development of the policy, or the conversation surrounding it. Much of the national debate in Australia has focused on youth mental health and wellbeing and the risks posed by social media, and is dominated by parents, carers, state and federal government and legacy media. In response to the lack of young people's voices in the national conversation, our team of 14 leading researchers from five universities interviewed 86 young people aged 12–15 from around Australia (see Osman et al., 2025). We asked them if they used social media, how they used it if they did, what they knew about the then proposed ban, their thoughts on it, and how they think social media can be improved. In this proposed paper, we focus on young people's perceptions of the ban and their visions for alternate regulations that respond more accurately to their needs. The young people we interviewed referred to the legislation as a "blanket ban" that appeases adults but obscures the issues they feel need addressing. Their fears are that the ban will give parents and carers a false sense of security, prevent help seeking from underage users that encounter issues and give platforms less incentive to improve content, safety and gaming features. Banning it fully just straight up makes it a lot harder than finding a solution to the problem… it's like taking the easy solution." Boy, 12Young people call for better education, and more restrictions that respond in a more nuanced way to the problems they actually have with social media. They also recognise that their own experiences on social media may not reflect others' experiences and that the legislation may have unintended consequences as people lose networks of support that are embodied in different ways via social media, a concern shared by experts (Nogrady, 2025).I think there should just be more education and restrictions and openness about it." Girl, 13Far from being the vulnerable users that have been portrayed as at-risk in the Australian national debate, our participants had awareness of the risks and challenges of social media, demonstrated agency and shared informed visions for better national policy related to their social media use. Their perspectives highlight the need for including under-16s in policy- and decision-making that directly affects them, to ensure that future iterations of the legislation are evidence-based, centre their rights and improve their online experiences.

DCC16 Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban and Its International Repercussions

PN 75 Do young or deviant profiles best predict time spent on YouTube?

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Using the latest ban on social media for children and teenagers in Denmark (under 15) and beyond as a backdrop, this paper sets out to understand what best predicts time spent on YouTube and discusses to what extent this is problematic for the wellbeing of users and society at large. Statistics (Statistics Denmark) show that young people have a higher use of social media than older age groups and that young people report using social media for news to a larger extent than older age groups (Reuters News Report; Danish Ministry of Digitalization). At the same time, time spent on social media has been considered a threat to the wellbeing of children and young people (Haidt; Tølbøll, 2025).However, other studies point to YouTube as a niche medium (Bechmann et al., 2025; Burgess & Green, 2009) where people outside the norm (Munger, 2024) can potentially find topics of interest that would not normally be catered for in mainstream media. Such profiles might therefore be a better predictor of time spent on YouTube than the "young" profile category, and could be an important factor in understanding systemic risks to society that might otherwise go unnoticed. At the same time, using time spent on social media as a proxy for problematic usage across young and deviant profiles could be a simplistic understanding of what is actually problematic, since it does not take into consideration what is viewed or whether people spending above-average time on YouTube themselves find it problematic or productive for their wellbeing (Coyne et al., 2023; Mahalingham, McEvoy, et al., 2023; Tomczyk & Selmanagic Lizde, 2023; Van Den Eijnden et al., 2016). This paper aims to provide more knowledge of the empirical patterns of the Danish population's use of YouTube. Through a combined data donation and survey study of 1,063 Danes approximated to represent the Danish YouTube population (Bechmann et al., 2025), we combine participants' viewing, search, and subscription logs with survey questions on self-reported well-being and profiling batteries. This provides in-depth patterns of daily (and nightly) time spent on YouTube and what best predicts above-average time spent—whether young profiles or deviant profiles (dark psychological triads, extreme political leaning, conspiracy mentality, etc.).Using this analysis as a stepping stone, we discuss whether such usage is problematic by analyzing content viewed and factors such as self-reported problematic use, the ratio between self-selected channels (subscriptions, searches) and viewed content as a proxy for non-algorithmically controlled viewing, compared to viewing without pre-action indicators such as non-search and short-form video viewing (Shorts), which has been proposed to have time-retaining power. We further report to what extent such functions in themselves could predict time spent. These additional analyses lead to a general discussion of how the field and society at large understand problematic social media

usage and contribute a novel national population-scale data donation correlational study that provides new empirical perspectives on a contested topic.

DCC16 Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban and Its International Repercussions

PN 76 Digital literacy as an alternative to social media bans

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Especially for adolescents, social media can provide an important space not only for socializing but also for identity development, including experimenting with self-presentation, finding role models, and interacting with online audiences (Pérez-Torres, 2024). However, the use of social media can come with several risks, for example, being confronted with uncivil, hateful, or non-age-appropriate content. Thus, public discourse in recent years has been dominated by the question of social media bans for adolescents under a certain age. However, it is not yet clear how such measures can be implemented in practice, and whether they really address the problems they are intended to solve. Additionally, it can be argued that theoretically and empirically convincing arguments in favor of specific age restrictions are lacking. Usage data for Germany and many other countries moreover show that even younger adolescents under the age of 16 use social media in a diverse manner and for various developmentally relevant purposes (Feierabend et al., 2024). Completely banning social media from their lives would result in significant and far-reaching disruptions to their social lives and information behavior. The question of whether social media use is beneficial or harmful, especially for adolescents, seems to depend rather on the skills young users possess for using it. As data from Germany show, also younger adolescents are quite reflective when it comes to their perception and usage of algorithmically curated content on social media (Wendt et al., 2024). Although these findings relate to the specific skill set of algorithm literacy, they can also be indicative of possessing general skills that fall under the concept of digital literacy, aiming to minimize the negative effects of digital media use and maximize its benefits (Helsper et al., 2021). Thus, this contribution argues that an early and broadly implemented promotion of digital literacy among children and adolescents might serve as a valuable alternative to social media bans.

DCC16 Australia's Under-16 Social Media Ban and Its International Repercussions

PN 77 Teknalgia and the Anxious Generation of Parents: On Alternatives to Age-Based Social Media Restrictions

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Fuelled by the technologically determinist claims of The Anxious Generation (Haidt, 2024), the campaign to implement social media age restrictions legislation in Australia tapped into deep-seated parental anxieties about the impact of social media on children's mental health and wellbeing. While the concerns articulated by vocal parent groups did not necessarily represent the diverse views of parents and caregivers across the country (Ogun et al., 2025), they were nonetheless backed by powerful political and economic interests (including Murdoch's NewsCorp media holdings in Australia), and this proved decisive in producing social media age restrictions as the only plausible 'solution' to the youth mental health crisis. Parents are right to be concerned about the wellbeing of their children in relation to social media. The internet was never designed for children and too many are exposed to unreasonable risks of harm online (Livingstone & Third, 2017). Stronger regulation – among other measures – will be vital to holding social media companies accountable to the needs, rights and aspirations of children in Australia, and elsewhere. Nonetheless, through a brief analysis of the construction of parental responsibility and idealised childhood in Australian news media coverage of the restrictions, I argue that the heightened parental concern that characterised the debate is a cypher for broader concerns about the loss of childhood – what I label teknalgia (from the Greek teknon (child) and algia (grief/loss) – and an intensifying sense that both government and parental forms of authority are in crisis. This in turn undermines parents' confidence in managing their children's social media practices and prevents governments' development of effective strategies to secure children's rights in relation to social media. To move beyond teknalgia, the paper then proposes a series of alternatives to restrictive regulation to strengthen children's wellbeing in relation to social media use, including:1. Centring children's best interests by adopting a rights-based approach to interventions impacting children's engagement with the digital environment;2. Foregrounding the complexity of drivers of children's mental health and wellbeing, recognising that while social media engagement comes with many risks of harm for children, with the right protections in place, it also enables significant benefits for children's mental health and wellbeing (REF);3. Mobilising an ecosystemic approach to regulation, acknowledging that no single piece of regulation can reasonably address the myriad factors that expose children to risk of harm online;4. Drawing on the evidence base to work with experts, child-facing practitioners and technology companies to develop technical standards to underpin the regulation of platform features that are known to be harmful to children (such as gambling features, privacy-infringing data collection, infinite feeds, algorithmic delivery of age-inappropriate content); 5. Identifying and activating standards via transnational digital governance mechanisms that can hold social media companies to account for children's rights in the digital environment on an international scale and, by levelling the playing field for social media companies, can use competitive drivers to encourage platforms to design not just safe but optimal digital services and products for children.

DCC17 Imaginaries and Collective Identities in Digital Cultures

PP 0945 Generating generations: Cultural and social representations of generational cohorts through visual generative AI

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While a growing body of literature has focused on generative AI's biases and related harms, less attention has been paid to how 'culture' is encoded within generative models (Airoldi, 2022). We address this gap by examining how generative AI visually reproduces cultural and social representations of different generational cohorts.

Generative AI systems incorporate cultural knowledge and social imaginaries within their technical architectures. When examining AI-generated content, we must consider not so much what is represented, but rather the ways in which the norms embedded within generative texts and images are culturally situated and, in turn, the impact that this content may have on collective representation and perception (Gillespie, 2024).

Due to its culturally loaded and shifting nature, the sociological concept of 'generations' represents a particularly well-suited site for an investigation of this kind. Generations have been defined as birth-cohorts, people experiencing specific historical events, or else sharing the same media of reference (Mannheim, 1952; Bolin, 2016). By focusing on generations, we aim to explore how distinctive cultural visions are reproduced and consolidated through model-generated representations.

To this end, we adopted a mixed-methods approach combining network analysis and qualitative visual analysis to examine a dataset of 1400 images that we generated using DALL·E. We designed our prompts to elicit representations of four generational cohorts alongside an unmarked control group. Informed by literature on generations, the prompts were structured along three dimensions: cohort-based, demographic-based, and performance-based, allowing us to capture demographic, socio-material, and performative aspects of generational identity.

Network analysis was employed to identify shared visual elements, using labels extracted via Google Vision API to map patterns of convergence and differentiation across cohorts (Omena et al., 2021). Qualitative visual analysis was then employed to interpret the aesthetic and narrative dimensions of selected images in greater depth.

Our findings show that DALL·E leveraged cultural markers like fashion styles, technological devices, and social settings to produce distinctive representations of generations. Millennials and Generation Z emerged as closely aligned, both visually and structurally, forming a 'technological cluster' set apart by laptops, smartphones, headphones, and café or 'retro' domestic settings. Baby Boomers were represented through family-oriented and caregiving roles, together with domestic interiors, gardening activities, and print media. Generation X was represented through broader themes such as outdoor leisure, conviviality, and 'analogue' forms of social interaction, thus suggesting a relative lack of distinctive cultural traits embedded in the model.

Beyond cohort-specific traits, our analysis reveals a dominant, cross-generational, 'generic' aesthetic centred on happiness, togetherness and healthy activities, which produces an idealized vision/version of everyday life. This is also the aesthetic that the model mobilizes by default in the absence of explicit indications, thus flattening cultural, geographic, and social differences.

Rather than merely executing prompts, DALL·E reveals how cultural complexity and normative visions are encoded in the model and rendered visible through AI-generated images (Westberg & Kvåle, 2025). We thus argue that generative AI models participate in the construction of imaginaries surrounding generations by reproducing, standardizing and, at times, reshaping both cultural knowledge and social imaginaries.

DCC17 Imaginaries and Collective Identities in Digital Cultures

PP 0946 Creating an alternative or stereotypical image of the nation?: User-generated nation branding in Japan and China

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Existing studies of nation branding tend to focus on how a nation brand is created and disseminated by governments, companies, and branding experts. This has led to a lack of focus on alternative forms and practices of nation branding generated by social media users (e.g., vlogs and photos), and in particular, to what extent users contribute to challenging or reinforcing established images of the nation in traditional forms of nation branding.

To fill this lacuna, theoretically, this study introduces the concept of 'user-generated nation branding' (UGNB), which refers to the voluntary creation and public distribution of nation branding messages undertaken by individuals who are not professional nation branders. The concept draws on several bodies of literature, including work on user-generated content/branding/nationalism, audience engagement in the digital spheres, influencer cultures, Orientalism, and tourism studies.

Empirically, two representative cases of UGNB were examined, the 'Abroad in Japan' and 'Liziqi' social media accounts. These cases involve two influencers – Chris Broad and Li Ziqi – both of whom have millions of followers. While Chris Broad films the everyday life of a British man living in Japan, Li Ziqi records a Chinese woman's daily activities in rural China. They both started as ordinary online users and subsequently became social media influencers. Their accounts thus provide a rich empirical base for understanding the development of UGNB over an extended period of time. Furthermore, these two cases feature UGNB from a foreigner's and a citizen's perspective, and involve two different countries, Japan and China, which are characterised by different histories of UGNB, different political systems, and different social media platforms. The two cases therefore simultaneously serve as maximum variation cases, enabling a comprehensive picture of UGNB and its varieties in different contexts.

A total of 458 video and image posts (255 from the 'AIJ' YouTube and Instagram accounts, and 203 from the 'Liziqi' YouTube and Weibo accounts) were analysed using quantitative content analysis. 18 posts from the large sample were further examined using multimodal analysis to provide a qualitative, in-depth analysis of the multimodal representations of the nation.

The analysis has found different types of themes strategically used by the two nation branders, suggesting the crucial role of the nation brander's positionality in UGNB. In 'AIJ', the brander's thematic focus on travel, food, scenery, and social situation/integration reflected his positionality as a foreigner and his encounters with the Japanese 'Other', while in 'Liziqi', the brander's thematic focus on food, traditional culture, festival, and scenery reflected her positionality as a citizen and her promotion of a traditional China through cooking national food and making traditional handicrafts. Different types of Orientalism were also found, with techno-Orientalism commonly used in 'AIJ' and romanticised self-Orientalism recurrently employed in 'Liziqi'. This points to the issue of stereotyping, and suggests that UGNB does not necessarily contribute to challenging or disrupting traditional forms of nation branding. Finally, support from commercial and institutional actors also influenced UGNB content, resulting in the representation of particular forms of the nation over others.

DCC17 Imaginaries and Collective Identities in Digital Cultures

PP 0947 Cyborg imaginaries and AI: A computational grounded theory of online pioneer community discussions on human augmentation

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Human Augmentation (HA) technologies, including prosthetics, neurostimulation devices, brain–computer interfaces (BCIs), and microchip implants, are advancing for both medical and non-medical purposes, with expectations of expansion beyond current niche experimentation. Pioneer communities (Hepp, 2016) such as biohackers and transhumanists actively experiment with and debate these technologies, making them important spaces in which future imaginaries for HA technologies, which we refer to as cyborg imaginaries, take shape. This study employs computational grounded theory (Carlsen & Ralund, 2022) and draws on 198,003 posts and comments from three Reddit communities to analyze how participants construct cyborg imaginaries.

Our theoretical framework situates HA within the broader process of digitalization, in which datafication, algorithmization, and platformization extend to the human body through cyborgization. This process aligns with transhumanist beliefs that human evolution can be steered through technology and reflects implicit techno-religiosity, as technology becomes a source of meaning, guidance, and transcendence (Latzer, 2025). Pioneer communities contribute to this process by engaging with augmentation technologies as tools for body modification, self-optimization, and long-term human transformation. Drawing on the understanding of future imaginaries as contested and negotiated in community discourse (Mager & Katzenbach, 2021), we examine cyborg imaginaries as they emerge in these pioneer communities.

Our findings show that cyborg imaginaries in online pioneer communities are structured around two key tensions. First, the Apocalyptic–Emancipatory axis contrasts fears of dehumanization, technological dependence, and loss of autonomy with hopeful visions of enhanced capabilities, extended longevity, and liberation from biological constraints. Second, the Inevitability–Contingency axis reflects whether participants view these imagined futures as unavoidable or as dependent on factors such as individual choices, governance, and technological development.

A notable finding is the growing prominence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in shaping cyborg imaginaries. As discussions of AI, BCIs, and automation increased alongside the rise of large language models (LLMs), AI became a lens through which participants assessed the objectives, implications, and timelines of cyborg imaginaries. As a result HA, and especially BCIs, are reframed as means of adapting to rapid AI advances or remaining competitive with increasingly capable systems, from LLMs to AI-driven robotics. Alongside desirable imaginaries of human-AI symbiosis, a parallel strand emphasizes concerns about dehumanization, loss of autonomy, and widening divides between augmented and non-augmented individuals. While much of this discourse is shaped by current AI developments, some discussions also speculate about Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) as a disruptive future possibility, albeit with considerable uncertainty.

Overall, the study presents a characterization of cyborg imaginaries and highlights the growing role of AI in shaping future imaginaries surrounding human augmentation technologies.

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DCC18 Modeling Digital Communication Futures: Large Language Models and Agent-Based Simulations

PN 83 Between control and realism: Learnings from a three-year project

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How can we study the effects of platform mechanics such as different news feed rankings, moderation policies, or network affordances if we cannot run experiments on the platforms themselves? Besides field experiments in collaboration with the platforms themselves (which suffer from numerous drawbacks as well; see Munger, 2025), it is hard to come up with research designs that allow for experimentally testing such interventions in a way that takes into account complexity, non-linearity, and feedback. One approach is to build a so-called digital twin of online social networks. In doing so, we unite classical simulation with the use of generative AI.Introducing large language models into the world of simulations has come with a great promise: increasing realism. Rather than exchanging states such as 'pro' or 'against' an opinion, agents can exchange actual arguments. And rather than having simple rules and formulas that decide whether an agent engages in a specific behavior or not, agents can rely on artificial intelligence to make these decisions. But this comes at a cost: the number of moving parts in the model becomes tremendous, and it is hard to say what exactly causes an outcome. In essence, clear rules are replaced by black boxes. This is a clash of two worlds. On the one hand, one in which well-defined mathematical models are studied, in which many simplifying assumptions are made, but in which we can clearly isolate the effect of setting one specific parameter. On the other hand, one in which we try to mimic the real world as closely as possible, but have problems isolating effects. The dilemma plays at three levels: (1) Modelling of the network; (2) modelling of user behaviour; (3) modelling of content produced by users. Empirical network structures may not follow standard models; empirical users do not 'take turns' but whether they view, post, or engage with content is influenced by a multitude of factors; and empirical users exchange a variety of texts rather than scalars or vectors. Building agents that are realistic enough is far from easy (Münker et al., 2025), and validation is not as common as it should be (Larooij & Törnberg, 2025). The crucial question, then, is: How much realism within a digital twin is needed to arrive at valid conclusions? Those coming from a classic simulation perspective will not be convinced by a model that cannot be described in mathematical formulas and cannot be said to be well-understood; but policy makers and other stakeholders will not be convinced by a model that makes far-reaching assumptions that in practice are obviously never fulfilled. In this contribution, I am not going to take sides but systematize experiences and insights from three years of a large-scale digital-twin project about such issues, how to deal with them, and what conclusions to draw. With this, I hope to draw a realistic picture of what is possible and what is not, and what caveats and opportunities have to be considered.

DCC18 Modeling Digital Communication Futures: Large Language Models and Agent-Based Simulations

PN 84 An agent-based model of online public discourse

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Digital media have created unprecedented opportunities for ordinary citizens to access information and engage in political discussions with individuals beyond their immediate social networks. However, this rapidly evolving participatory environment has also exposed citizens to various forms of harmful content, which can fuel conflict, political distrust, and polarization (van Aelst et al., 2017). Such content manifests as hate speech, offensive language, harassment, graphic content, misinformation, and spam, among other forms (Arora et al., 2024). Ultimately, its diffusion erodes the conditions necessary for healthy online discourse and democratic citizenship. In this study, we develop an empirically grounded computational simulation of the online political information environment, where agents engage in political discussions. The study contributes to communication research methodology by combining agent-based modeling (ABM) with large language models (LLMs), while grounding the approach in theoretical and empirical insights from communication science. Specifically, we develop generative agents capable of language-mediated interactions (Vezhnevets et al., 2023) relying on respondent-centered data from representative surveys and social media data donations collected in fall 2025 in the

Netherlands, Spain, Romania, and Lithuania. At the same time, we specify agent behaviors, interaction rules, and the environment based on established knowledge in digital communication. Currently, our model represents an abstract digital public sphere—an online space "where participation is open and freely available to everybody who is interested, where matters of common concern can be discussed, and where proceedings are visible to all" (Schäfer, 2014, p.322). Within this space, generative agents interact by publicly voicing their stances, consuming information, and refraining from participation. The model includes entities representing ordinary citizens, strategic agents (e.g., politicians, media, activists, trolls, or bots), and content (i.e., objects representing opinionated pieces of information). Ordinary citizens are modeled as empirically informed agent types parameterized by survey responses capturing sociodemographic characteristics, media consumption patterns, attitudes, trust, and personality traits. Strategic agents are modeled as theoretical abstractions that simulate interventions in online discourse and are characterized by political opinions, civility level, and activity frequency. The content items are agent-generated objects with attributes such as opinion, civility, quality, and popularity metrics. Ordinary citizens are randomly placed in a scale-free (Barabási & Albert, 1999) network that represents a digital public sphere, where node degrees follow a power-law degree distribution characteristic of many digital media networks (Goel et al., 2016). The network has a community structure, with high connection density within communities (Holland et al., 1983) and homophily with respect to relevant node traits and demographics (De Choudhury, 2011). Undirected links between agents represent mutual channels through which information travels and persuasion occurs (e.g., Flache et al., 2017; Centola, 2018) based on link weights denoting influence strength (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). We explore various outcomes of simulated interactions, including polarization, fragmentation, engagement, and incivility under different moderation strategies. Once validated with forthcoming waves of data, the model will be used to evaluate the potential impacts of alternative digital media regulation strategies and generate insights for policymakers.

DCC18 Modeling Digital Communication Futures: Large Language Models and Agent-Based Simulations

PN 85 Designing for immersion: Surveying frameworks for LLM-based social agents in human-participant experiments

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The integration of large language models into agent-based social simulations has created new possibilities for communication research, enabling experiments where human participants interact with believable synthetic social (i.e, multi agent) environments. As the field adopts these methods, the risk emerges that without shared frameworks for social simulation, researchers may resort to bespoke and heterogeneous solutions for agent interaction dynamics—e.g., turn-taking, targeting, action decisions—leading to methodological fragmentation that could undermine the comparability and reproducibility of produced studies. Current mock social media frameworks do not provide guidance on this troublingly open design space (Jagayat et al., 2023). Our contribution to this panel is a presentation of two related works interested in avoiding that outcome. First, we present preliminary findings from an interdisciplinary rapid review addressing:RQ: What design frameworks and principles currently guide researchers in specifying LLM-based social agents for human-participant experiments, particularly regarding multi-agent interaction dynamics that support participant immersion? Drawing on literature from human-computer interaction, computational social science, and games studies, we identify several frameworks—including Generative Agents (Park et al., 2023), Concordia (Vezhnevets et al., 2023), and Inner Thoughts (Ye et al., 2025)—that produce believable interaction dynamics as emergent properties of artificial cognitive architecture. This emergence is potentially a strength, as rather than requiring researchers to manually specify parameters for every aspect of agent behaviour, these frameworks can generate naturalistic interaction from common and reproducible foundations. However, these frameworks were developed in neighbouring disciplines and remain largely untested for the specific demands of human-participant experiments in communication science. In particular, validation efforts have focused on behavioral calibration (whether agent populations match aggregate human response patterns) rather than experiential validity, or whether emergent interactions feel believable to individual participants in experimental settings. This challenge is therefore interdisciplinary: bridging the gap between multi-agent simulation research and experimental methodology. Our review works toward that bridge: surveying available frameworks, assessing their suitability for communication research, and identifying what validation is required before they can serve as standardised foundations for the field. Second, we report on the associated development and deployment of Simulacra, an open-source platform for conducting immersive LLM-augmented social experiments. Simulcra is being developed as part of a three-year project conducting participant-based experiments across multiple platform types and populations in multiple countries. By the time of this panel, we expect to have fielded one or two studies, providing a basis for discussion on whether emergent interaction dynamics from established frameworks can support participant immersion and ecological validity in experimental contexts.

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PN 86 Epistemically vicious LLMs: Influencing the exhibition of epistemic vices in Large Language Models

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Large Language Models (LLMs) are increasingly used to simulate human behavior in studies of opinion dynamics (Chuang et al., 2024), misinformation spread (Farr et al., 2025), and simulated social media environments (Törnberg et al., 2023). However, LLMs appear more accuracy-oriented and less epistemically flawed than humans (Chuang et al., 2024). This raises important validity concerns, because it is unclear to what extent model behaviors in such research resemble that of the human behavior they are intended to represent. Prior studies suggest that incorporating human-like epistemic shortcomings can result in simulations that better match real-world belief dynamics (Chuang et al., 2024). Drawing on virtue epistemology as a framework for understanding human epistemic shortcomings, this study examines whether LLMs can be prompted to reliably display epistemically vicious behavior. Epistemic vices can be understood as intellectual defects that pose an obstacle to knowledge. The language of epistemic vices is useful in discussing how human character and behavior influence the knowledge gathering process. Building on dual-process accounts of human reasoning, cognitive biases can be treated as the behavioral exhibition of epistemic vices (Samuelson & Church, 2015). Relating cognitive biases to epistemic vices enables the analysis of clusters of interrelated biases in terms of more stable, higher-order intellectual human traits (Roberts & West, 2015).While direct research on epistemic vices in LLMs has been scarce up until now, research on the existence of cognitive biases in such models has had more attention (e.g., Malberg et al., 2025; Xie et al., 2024). Using a paired experimental design adapted from Malberg et al. (2025) for the measurement of cognitive biases in LLMs, two widely-used and state-of-the-art LLMs (ChatGPT-4o and Llama3.1) were provided with system prompts to encourage behavior related to one of the two analyzed epistemic vices in this study, namely closed-mindedness and intellectual conformity. Vice exhibition was measured through scenario pairs targeting biases that are theoretically aligned with their related epistemic vice, namely confirmation bias and conservatism bias for the vice of closed-mindedness and the bandwagon effect and social desirability bias for the vice of intellectual conformity. The inclusion of a chat history was added as an experimental condition to analyze the impact of instruction drift on the endurance of the vice prompting. In total, 2,000 scenario prompts across eight different conditions were used in this study. It was hypothesized that 'vice prompting' would increase the strength and prevalence of related cognitive biases, and that the addition of a chat history would in turn weaken this vice prompting effect. Results show that vice prompting generally increases bias scores, especially for the vice of closed-mindedness. The addition of a modest chat history does not significantly impact the effect of vice prompting. Exploratory analyses of model replies indicate model-specific differences in how vice prompts shift both bias scores and underlying option choices. Overall, the findings support the feasibility of 'vice prompting' as a tool for more human-realistic simulations of epistemic behavior and for studying how epistemic vices shape information ecosystems.

DCC18 Modeling Digital Communication Futures: Large Language Models and Agent-Based Simulations

PN 87 From timelines to agents: Evaluating the behavioral fidelity of LLM-based agents for social media simulation

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Simulating social media users with generative agents has emerged as a promising methodological approach to studying social media dynamics, including information diffusion and opinion formation (Gao et al., 2024; Park et al., 2023; Törnberg et al., 2023). Such simulations allow researchers to explore counterfactual scenarios, scale empirical analyses, and reduce reliance on costly or incomplete behavioral data. However, the validity of such approaches hinges on a critical yet underexplored question: to what extent can LLM-based agents faithfully replicate real users' attitudes and content production? Despite growing interest in LLM-driven social simulations, systematic empirical evaluations of their behavioral fidelity remain scarce (Larooij & Törnberg, 2025).This study examines the capabilities and limitations of LLM-based generative agents constructed from social media timelines. Specifically, we investigate whether such agents can (1) infer a user's stance on a political topic that the user has not previously discussed, and (2) generate topic-relevant content that aligns with the user's real-world stance, tone, and style. Addressing both predictive and generative dimensions is crucial, as success in one does not necessarily imply success in the other. We build generative agents representing approximately 200 German Twitter users who mentioned the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory in October 2018. The dataset is balanced between supporters and opponents of the theory. Each agent is created via in-context learning, using up to 100 tweets posted prior to the user's first explicit mention of the topic. We evaluate three LLMs throughout this study: OpenAI's GPT-4o, LLaMA 70B, and Qwen 72B. These models were selected based on their strong performance and widespread adoption. Our analysis reveals substantial variation across models. GPT-4o achieves the highest accuracy in stance prediction, demonstrating

strong inferential capacity even with limited contextual information. However, its performance declines in content generation, particularly for users supporting the conspiracy theory, suggesting that internal safety mechanisms may suppress or distort controversial outputs. Qwen exhibits similar but less pronounced patterns. In contrast, LLaMA underperforms in stance prediction but produces generated tweets that more closely resemble original user content in terms of stance alignment, tone, and diversity, highlighting a trade-off between classification accuracy and generative realism. Moreover, LLaMA was more sensitive to prompt length and benefited from a retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) approach. Finally, we examine the role of social context by incorporating tweets from a user's network. GPT-4o becomes more stance-aligned and more toxic when exposed to toxic peer content, whereas LLaMA frequently fails to generate any outputs under these conditions, suggesting a different kind of safety constraint. Qwen showed minimal responsiveness to the network context. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that LLMs differ markedly in how they model ideological reasoning and social influence. We argue that rigorous evaluation of both predictive and generative behaviors is essential before deploying LLM-based agents in social media simulations. Appropriate integration of suitable LLMs into agent-based simulations is crucial for ensuring the credibility of these simulations as experimental environments for studying online dynamics and for informing the design of social media interventions and related policymaking.

DCC19 Mediated Past, Present, and Future

PP 1042 Remediating the past - retro video games and digital nostalgia on YouTube

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In recent years, YouTube has emerged as a important platform for the remediation and circulation of retro gaming culture. This phenomenon is closely tied to the broader cultural trend of *retromania* - a nostalgic fascination with the past particularly prevalent among members of Generations X and Y, who came of age during the formative decades of home video game development and popularization. This paper investigates how retro video games are represented, recontextualized, re-experienced and popularized through contemporary audiovisual content published on YouTube.

Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of media remediation (e.g. Bolter & Grusin), media memory, and digital nostalgia, the study conceptualizes YouTube as both a participatory digital archive and a dynamic platform for reconstructing the embodied experiences of gameplay from past decades. The author proposes a typology of dominant content genres, including retro gameplay and live streams, hardware presentations and restorations, retrospective reviews, and documentary-historical productions. Through qualitative content analysis of selected international channels (*Digital Foundry Retro, Gaming Historian, Nostalgia Nerd*), and their Polish counterparts (*arhn.eu, Grysław, Retrogralnia*) the paper examines how creators employ specific narrative strategies, aesthetic conventions, and platform affordances to construct emotionally resonant and culturally meaningful retrospectives. The emotional charge of these videos, anchored in personal anecdotes, sensory triggers, and shared generational experiences, positions them as powerful agents of affective memory transmission. These materials also contribute to an emergent, decentralized archive of video game culture, filling the gaps left by institutional historiographies and traditional media documentation.

Attention is also devoted to the interplay between retro aesthetics and contemporary editing techniques, as well as to modes of audience engagement that reinforce collective memory and generational identification. YouTube's algorithmic structure and participatory affordances not only shape content visibility, but also influence how nostalgia is curated, circulated, and collectively reinforced within digital subcultures.

Creators operate at the intersection of fan labor, informal media education, and archival practice, offering an affective, bottom-up reconstruction of video game history through the lens of personal and collective memory.

DCC19 Mediated Past, Present, and Future

PP 1043 Platformed witnessing: TikTok as an arena for new testimony practices

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Traditionally, witnessing refers to first-hand, retrospective accounts offered by those present at an event (Peters, 2001). While historically authorized by formal institutions (Or et al., 2023), digital-age testimonies are increasingly produced and shared by individuals within networked, algorithmically structured environments (Richardson & Zolkos, 2022; Wu & Montgomery, 2020; Rae et al., 2018). Existing scholarship has demonstrated that Instagram, YouTube, and Weibo afford distinct modes of testimonial performance (Sumiala, 2019; Henig & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022; Wu & Montgomery, 2020). On TikTok, however, scholarship has primarily focused on mediated memory, examining how the platform's "playful" conventions are used to bear witness to distant historical events, most notably Holocaust remembrance (Divon & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022; 2025). Far less is known about how TikTok's distinctive architecture, marked by immediacy and multimodality, shapes testimonies produced in the immediate aftermath of crisis.

To address this gap, this study examines witnessing on TikTok, focusing on testimonies uploaded by survivors of the Nova music festival massacre within the first four months following the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023. Data was collected

through hashtag and keyword searches across multiple devices. To ensure the corpus consisted of verifiable testimonial content, posts were filtered to include only direct first-person witnessing (Peters, 2001) or post-human testimony (Romeo, 2025). Guided by grounded theory, a thematic analysis of the audiovisual materials (Altheide & Schneider, 2013) inductively examined patterns of form across testimonies.

The analysis revealed five testimonial practices. One group of practices reconfigured established testimonial forms by adapting inherited witnessing conventions to TikTok's platformed environment. In *archival testimonies*, witnesses adapt documentary-style archival witnessing conventions to TikTok's short-form vertical format, reflecting an anti-spectacular visual ethic rooted in Holocaust testimony archives (Pinchevski, 2012). In *remediated televised testimonies*, users re-uploaded broadcast segments and reframed them for TikTok. The second group of testimonial practices was more directly shaped by TikTok's platform logic and affordances. In *selfie testimonies* survivors self-recorded and shared their account through a frontal selfie aesthetic. In *return to the field testimony*, survivors presented the event site post-humanly, asserting presence through added textual or audiovisual framing. In *post-factum human field testimony*, raw footages from the event was later uploaded and anchored as testimony through accompanying text. Finally, in *carousel testimony*, survivors and institutions create an unfolding narrative through multimodal slides of images, audio and text screenshots, inviting viewers to control the pace of progression and thus become co-producers of testimony.

Building on these insights, I propose the concept of "platformed witnessing," to describe a strategic platform-oriented process in which survivors and institutions craft and circulate their testimonies in ways that are attuned to platform norms, affordances, perceived audience expectations, and engagement metrics, in order to remain visible within TikTok's algorithmic attention economy (Ristovska, 2016; Abidin, 2020; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2024; Henig & Ebbrecht-Hartmann, 2022). The study advances the concept of digital testimony by showing that witnessing on TikTok is not merely mediated by the platform but actively produced through it, as witnesses and institutions increasingly professionalize their strategies to enhance the visibility and impact of their testimonies.

DCC19 Mediated Past, Present, and Future

PP 1044 Mourning Meta? A paraplatform reading enterprise social media sunsetting

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Recent years have seen increased attention to the endings of digital platforms (McCammon and Lingel, 2022), with a particular focus on the loss of platforms which were meaningful to people in their personal or private lives (Corry, 2021; Edwards and Boellstorff, 2020; MacKinnon, 2022). This study builds on and departs from these trends to explore how the loss of specific media platforms might manifest itself in professional contexts. Given the increased media-dependent nature of work in general (Andrijasevic et al., 2021; Fast and Jansson, 2019; Plesner and Husted, 2020), this is a topic which deserves attention.

Our case study is the 2025 sunsetting of Workplace, developed by Meta Platforms Inc. As an enterprise social medium (Leonardi et al., 2013), Workplace was explicitly designed for intra-organizational use, making it a rare case of platform loss that affects not users-as-consumers, but users-as-workers. Its shutdown thus opens a window onto how professional identities and organizational memory are negotiated. Our research question is: *What forms of memorialization and mourning are afforded when a professional platform ends, and how are these expressed on other professional media?*

To this end, we analyze Meta's official documentation of the sunsetting of Workplace, as well as content analysis of a thread of LinkedIn comments (n = 362) reacting to the news of the sunsetting. Thus, we use LinkedIn as a methodological *paraplatform* (Steinberg, 2024), offering a vantage point for studying the sunsetting of the Workplace platform. Our content analysis will code for the different communicative valences of responses (nostalgic, regretful, incredulous, etc.), as well as the relation of the speaker to the platform (former user, competitor, former developer, former Meta employee, etc.).

In this paper, we demonstrate that while the sunsetting of a professional platform is often understood as a common and mundane occurrence in digital workplace ecosystems, for the workers, platform loss is more than mere inconvenience. Through analysis of Workplace users' platform eulogies (Mackinnon, 2022), workers also express loss of personal and institutional memory and a breakdown of community, not unlike the loss of more personal platforms. We contextualize this among the discussion about digital media like Workplace complicating the boundary between the personal and professional (Bagger, 2025; Schaefer, 2023). While the use of digital platforms in working life is often associated with either neutrality or hostility from their users (Bagger, 2021; Bonini and Treré, 2024; Nyman et al., 2024), these findings complicate and nuance such assumptions. In doing so, we broaden the scope of platform death studies to include grief not just of platforms, but of the professional selves they scaffold.

DCC19 Mediated Past, Present, and Future

PP 1045 The anticipation machines: Presentism and future-making in digital societies

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A paradox appears to characterize late modern societies: while contemporary culture is marked by presentism and the contraction of temporal horizons (Harvey, 1989; Hartog, 2015), digital technologies are persistently framed as engines of future-oriented transformation. How, then, is digital transformation restoring a sense of the future within a presentist society? This paper presents the results of a critical investigation of this question, conducted through a mapping of the main contributions in contemporary theoretical and social debate.

The analysis situates this transformation within the broader shift from modern temporal regimes characterized by an open horizon of expectations (Koselleck, 2004) to late modern forms of presentism, in which immediacy, uncertainty, and acceleration dominate social experience (Bauman, 2007; Rosa, 2013). Digital technologies emerge as responses to demands for temporal compression and control, while simultaneously positioning themselves as infrastructures of future-making and collective emancipation (Hassan, 2013; Balbi, 2022; Kitchin, 2023).

Within digital temporality, the future is increasingly enacted through "anticipatory systems" (Poli, 2019). Datification and predictive analytics function as "anticipation machines," transforming uncertainty into probabilistic certainty. In this context, AI systems operate combining historical datasets with real-time inputs to generate actionable predictions. These systems do not merely represent future possibilities but actively intervene in the present, shaping behavior, decision-making, and institutional practices (Kitchin, 2014; Zuboff, 2019). Prediction thus becomes a form of governance, concentrating power in the hands of those who control data infrastructures and narrowing the future to what can be extrapolated from past patterns. In this process, extrapolation replaces potentiality, privileging calculable futures over openness and plurality.

Building on this framework, contemporary digital societies can be understood as structured by a peculiar form of future-making, conceptualized as "regimes of anticipation" (Adam, Murphy, & Clarke, 2009). While anticipation constitutes a necessary mode of future-making that legitimizes action in the present (Anderson, 2010), its transformation into the central axis of a normative regime produces what Adam and Groves (2007) describe as "future present." This shift establishes an obligation to remain informed, vigilant, and prepared, turning anticipation into a moral and affective imperative. Emotions such as hope, fear, and alertness thus become key political forces, reshaping responsibility and redistributing risk from collective institutions to individuals (Poli, 2017).

Highlighting the ethical and political implications of Anticipation in areas such as consumption, reproduction, education, and governance, the paper argues for comparative empirical research on Anticipation as a communicative arena in which shared images of the future are constructed and translated into present action, emphasizing how unequal access to this arena reinforces existing social asymmetries.

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DCC20 Rethinking Dis/Connectivity and Inequality

PP 1022 The disconnected citizen: Renegotiating civic participation beyond connectivity

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This paper explores voluntary digital (dis)connection as a practice that redistributes civic engagement across interpersonal networks and analogue spheres. In the present media landscape, digital disconnection manifests the multifaceted ways individuals resist or disengage from digital technologies and forms part of a *zeitgeist* in which the initial celebration of digital omnipresence is increasingly problematized (Albris et al., 2024).

Citizens who disengage from digital platforms or algorithmic feeds do not necessarily disengage from civic life but reorganize how and where civic participation is enacted. Building on scholarship on distributed citizenship (Moe, 2020; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2018), and the emerging "disconnection turn" in media and communication studies (Kuntsman & Miyake, 2019; Fast, 2021; Moe & Madsen, 2021; Bagger et al., 2024), the paper argues that voluntary disconnection should not be understood as civic withdrawal. Instead, democratic labor may be redistributed to less digitized spheres of everyday life,

such as interpersonal relations, social and professional networks, and analogue media practices, challenging assumptions that connectivity is a prerequisite for citizenship. Distancing may have implications not only for the disconnected individual but also for their close network, reshaping patterns of support and civic responsibility. This relational perspective draws attention to the distribution of resources, such as time, social capital, and gendered responsibilities within everyday life.

Drawing on interviews with individuals who identify as digitally disconnected and their close networks, this paper examines practices of voluntary digital (dis)connection in the light of ideas about a distributed citizenship. The paper examines participants' everyday media practices, motivations for disconnection, and strategies for remaining informed and civically responsive despite reduced digital connectivity. Particular attention is paid to how close social networks compensate for, are affected by, or actively enable disconnection, revealing its collective dimensions and the fragility of these arrangements, including reliance on interpersonal networks for information.

We conceptualize (dis)connection as complete or partial limitation of digital engagement, ranging from reduced smartphone use to withdrawal from social media or online news. By examining such practices, the paper explores how deliberate withdrawal challenges dominant norms of the "connected citizenship". Rather than treating connection and disconnection as binary, we frame (dis)connection as a dynamic space where civic participation and belonging are renegotiated across interpersonal and analogue networks.

DCC20 Rethinking Dis/Connectivity and Inequality

PP 1023 Digital disconnection and social inequalities: Toward a "stratified digital disconnection model"

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Over the past decade, research on digital disconnection has expanded significantly, producing a growing corpus of empirical studies that document diverse practices of digital non-use, limitation, and withdrawal within highly connected societies (Syvertsen & Vanden Abeele, 2016, 2025; Moe & Madsen, 2021). Despite this expansion, the field remains theoretically fragmented, with digital disconnection often conceptualised as an individual choice or lifestyle practice rather than as a socially patterned and structurally embedded phenomenon (Nguyen, 2023). This fragmentation limits our ability to systematically connect digital disconnection to broader processes of social inequality and digital disparity.

This paper contributes to ongoing efforts to theorise digital disconnection by developing an exploratory, integrative, and theory-building conceptual framework grounded in Bourdieusian sociology and in a critical synthesis of the existing literature. Building on Bourdieu's concepts of capital, field, and habitus, and informed by research on digital inequalities and digital capital (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020), this contribution proposes a **Stratified Digital Disconnection Model** as an innovative construct, that showcases how being connected and disconnected from digital media is unequally distributed across different social groups. This new framework highlights the implicit relationship between social inequalities and the ongoing oscillation between connection and disconnection, thereby rethinking how research in this field can be conducted.

Within this framework, digital resources, skills and dispositions constitute new forms of capital that operate within digitally structured fields shaped by platformisation, datafication and emerging AI-driven infrastructures. This theoretical contextualization of hyperconnected society contributes to the formation of a medial habitus that structures differentiated perspectives toward practices of connection and disconnection. Based on a critical review of the digital disconnection literature, the model conceptualises digital disconnection as stratified across varied positions, ranging from forced hyper-connectivity and constrained disconnection to more voluntary or privileged modes (Syvertsen & Vanden Abeele, 2025). This model presents an emerging framework that connects people's everyday practices of digital disconnection to broader social inequalities, showing how disconnecting online can either reinforce or challenge different forms of digital divide.

The Stratified Digital Disconnection Model could guide future research on the social and structural dimensions of digital disconnection and the multiple ways individuals experience and perform it.

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DCC20 Rethinking Dis/Connectivity and Inequality

PP 1024 Digital spaces as sites of inequalities: Young people navigating technology-facilitated gendered violence

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Digital spaces have increasingly become the ground where contemporary personal, socio-cultural, and political life is built. As shifting digital terrains shaped by platforms, metrics, and algorithmic governance, these environments enable participation while simultaneously producing fragmentation and inequality (Hargittai, 2001; Hargittai & Micheli, 2019). This paper engages with these tensions by examining technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) as a paradigmatic lens through which to interrogate the contradictory paths of contemporary digital cultures.

Drawing on feminist media studies (Jane, 2016; Powell & Henry, 2017; Ringrose et al., 2013; Wajcman, 2004), and socio-technical approaches (Castells, 1996; Couldry & Hepp, 2017; Elliot & Urry, 2010; Van Dijck et al., 2018), TFGBV is here conceptualised as a structural feature of platformised communication rather than an incidental misuse of digital tools. Digital inequalities and gendered violence are shown to be co-produced through platform infrastructures, algorithmic visibility, and normative cultures of interaction that unevenly distribute voice, exposure, and risk (Hall et al., 2023; 2024). Digital inequalities and gender-based violence are deeply intertwined: digital environments simultaneously enable new forms of expression and participation, while exposing women and girls to heightened risks of harassment, surveillance, coercive control, and symbolic violence. These dynamics contribute to processes of self-regulation, silencing, and withdrawal from public digital spaces, with broader implications for democratic participation and digital citizenship.

The paper presents empirical findings from Italy's largest national research programme on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, involving two universities (the University of Bologna and the University of Salento) and one research centre (CNR-IRPPS). While the wider programme also examined media narratives, institutional framings, and prevention campaigns, this paper focuses specifically on the adolescents' and young adults' stream. Drawing on 18 focus groups conducted with participants aged 13–22 (N = 105) across three Italian sites (Bologna, Lecce and Padova), the study employs thematic analysis to explore how young people interpret, negotiate, and respond to gendered harm in everyday digital environments.

Three interconnected dynamics emerge. First, young people navigate a care–control hinge, where practices such as location sharing, password exchange, and device access are framed as intimacy, normalising surveillance within relationships. Second, gendered hierarchies, expressed through double standards, male-gaze logics, and uneven reputational consequences, structure experiences of visibility and vulnerability. Third, while participants describe hostile online environments and algorithmic pressures, platforms are rarely recognized as actors shaping risk, enabling tool-neutral explanations, and reinforcing individualized responsibility.

By situating young people's experiences within broader socio-technical arrangements, the paper contributes to the debate on digital cultures as contested grounds. It argues for imagining alternative digital futures that address platform power, visibility regimes, and inequality as cultural and communicative issues rather than individual failures.

DCC21 Approaches to Researching the Digital

PP 1143 Modeling digital cultures: A scoping review of agent-based models simulating social media phenomena

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Communication research has advanced our understanding of individual-level processes in digital media communication, yet these insights are rarely linked to meso- and macro-level outcomes relevant to the field, including polarization dynamics, misinformation spread, and public opinion formation. Agent-based modeling (ABM) offers a powerful approach to bridging this gap by linking micro-level interactions to emergent macro-level phenomena (Waldherr et al., 2021). It also enables researchers to better understand the behavior of complex systems, explore key conditions and parameters, and generate hypotheses for future empirical research (Eberlen et al., 2017). Despite its potential, the application of ABM to social media research remains fragmented and underexplored in the social sciences. In this study, we systematically review how ABM has been applied in neighboring fields to study social media phenomena and offer a comprehensive foundation for building on existing models. Our analysis is based on 196 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings published through 2025 and indexed in EBSCO, Web of Science, and Scopus.

We find that most studies simulate social media platforms without attending to specific platform affordances and features, focusing instead on how users communicate (e.g., via weak or strong ties), how online networks are structured (e.g., scale-free or small world), and how users interact on platforms (e.g., post, comment, react, share). When a specific social media platform is modeled, researchers often draw on empirical data to inform the model, with Twitter (n = 52) and Facebook (n = 19) being the most commonly represented. Considering the wide variety of platforms examined in communication studies, we observe a notable lack of models for popular sites, including Reddit (n = 7) and YouTube (n = 4), as well as

Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn. Popular platforms in non-Western countries, such as Weibo (n = 14) and KakaoTalk (n = 1), also warrant further exploration, given their unique affordances and features.

The majority of studies focus on the following four outcomes: opinion and attitude dynamics, information and content diffusion, network properties and structural outcomes, and collective action. To model these phenomena, studies commonly employ opinion dynamics or epidemiological frameworks (e.g., bounded confidence, Susceptible-Infectious-Recovered). Occasionally, theories from sociology and psychology are used to inform agents' decision-making processes and behavior. However, theories commonly used in communication research, such as diffusion of innovation (Rogers et al., 2019) and the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974), are applied only rarely.

Our findings highlight the potential of ABM for modeling digital spaces and communication, while also calling for more diverse contributions from social scientists. Current applications often rely on assumptions from computer science, engineering, mathematics, and economics, often overlooking well-established theories and empirical insights from communication research. To address this gap, we recommend building on existing models by integrating insights from communication theory and empirical findings to enhance the explanatory power of models and contribute to the development of hypotheses and multi-level theories in the field. Through this work, we aim to encourage the broader adoption of ABM in communication research and provide a practical entry point for scholars studying digital cultures and communication.

DCC21 Approaches to Researching the Digital

PP 1144 Fading footprints: A multi-platform comparison of what social media keeps and deletes over five years

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"The Internet never forgets" is a widely coined phrase used to describe the web's presumed archiving function. The underlying myth suggests that once information is published online, it remains accessible indefinitely. However, research on deletion of platform data has repeatedly demonstrated that online content is regularly modified or deleted (see, f. e. Knöpfle & Schatto-Eckrodt, 2024), often by users themselves (Almuhimedi et al., 2023) or as a result of moderation activities by platform providers following violations of terms of service (Kurdi et al., 2021). To date, only a handful of studies (e.g. Tinati et al., 2017; Almuhimedi et al., 2023; Kurdi et al., 2021) have examined these deletion practices, despite their substantial implications for subsequent analyses, results and interpretations (Bühling, 2024). Moreover, existing studies differ in terms of the analysed timeframes, platforms, and research topics, while typically focusing on singular platforms. To develop a more comprehensive picture of deletion practices, our study examines five social media platforms and addresses the following research questions:

1. Method stability – to what extent have access conditions for online data collection changed, and which access routes remain available?
2. Content stability – to what extent is content still available, what proportion of data has been lost, and what platform-, message-, and content-related factors are associated with unavailability?

Empirically, we revisit a five-year-old dataset comprising posts and comments from five platforms – Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter/X, and Disqus – collected over a three-month period from the accounts of all German news organisations (N = 3,814,366 messages). We assess the continued availability of posts and comments and compare available versus unavailable messages to identify systematic patterns in missing data. In addition, we inductively code and analyse a subsample of messages (n = 2,071 comments) to examine content-related differences between available and deleted content that may indicate potential reasons for deletion.

Our findings reveal pronounced platform-specific differences in both access conditions and deletion rates, ranging from minimal losses on Instagram to substantial attrition on Disqus and severe access restrictions on Twitter/X. The content analysis of comments suggests that political and potentially sensitive content is disproportionately affected by moderation-related removals. In addition, we identify systematic data losses resulting from platform exits, such as organisations discontinuing their presence on a platform. This phenomenon is particularly evident on Disqus, where all missing posts can be attributed to organisational exits.

Overall, our results demonstrate that data collection practices and data disappearance are closely intertwined with platform-specific architectures, access regimes, and moderation practices. Revisiting the original dataset further highlights that long-term accessibility cannot be taken for granted, even when researchers attempt to replicate their own data collection workflows. At least with regard to research access, the internet "forgets" substantial amounts of data. These findings underscore the importance of systematically assessing data attrition across platforms and of developing robust measures of sample quality to support sustainable and reliable research using online communication data.

DCC21 Approaches to Researching the Digital

PP 1145 Rethinking digital sovereignty

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The growing debate on digital sovereignty has been restricted to states, corporations, social movements that are legally and socially recognized as legitimate actors, notwithstanding their agendas, practices, and impacts.[1] In contrast, this paper examines "rogue digital sovereignty." If digital sovereignty is "the exercise of agency, power, and control in shaping digital infrastructure, data, services, and protocolos"[2] by legitimate actors, "rogue digital sovereignty" refers to sovereign claims or actions over infrastructure, access, and content by groups in violation of legal, political, and ethical norms.

Like their legitimate counterparts, rogues assert sovereignty over digital infrastructure and content in two realms. The first, inward-focused is sovereign monopoly control over a territory—physical or virtual—and the population therein. The second, outward-focused is the professed need to protect territory under sovereign claims from external influence, intervention, or threat.

Theorizing "rogue digital sovereignty" lays bare the unresolved tensions of "digital sovereignty": interaction between sovereign dominions and the international system; tension between the ideal of sovereignty and its frequent violation by digital superpowers like the United States and China; platform and cyberspace sovereignty, and most importantly, the extension of sovereignty by digital networks beyond territory and infrastructure all the way to the human body. To theorize "rogue digital sovereignty" is to get a better grasp of processes of the "delinking [of]sovereignty and geography" that lead to an "indeterminacy of outcomes."[3]

I focus on digital sovereign claims by "Islamic State" and Western White Power, examining a corpus of Arabic, French, and English primary sources (manifestos, maps, currencies, drone footage, infographics, videos). Under the rubric of "rogue sovereignty," I compare these claims to those of nation-states (the US on Greenland; Russia on Ukraine; China on Taiwan) skirting international law.

Drawing on Bataille to analyze the data corpus described above, this article conceptualizes a new typeof digital sovereignty produced through digitally mediated affective manipulation.[4] This broadens the debate on digital sovereignty, and more broadly, sovereignty *tout court* in the digital age.[5]

1. For a good summary of perspectives, see Couture, Stephane and Toupin, Sophie (2019). What does the notion of "sovereignty" mean when referring to the digital? *New Media and Society*, 21(10), 2305–2322; and Julia Pohle and Thorsten Thiel, "Digital Sovereignty," *Internet Policy Review, 9*(4)(2020), https://doi.org/10.14763/2020.4.1532
2. Min Jiang and Luca Belli, "Introduction: Contesting Digital Sovereignty: Untangling a Complex and Multifaceted Concept," in M. Jianf and L. Belli, Eds., *Digital Sovereignty in the BRICS Countries* (pp. 1–38) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2025), p. 4.
3. Bratton, H. Benjamin (2015). *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p. 7.
4. Georges Bataille, *La Part Maudite* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949); Georges Bataille, *La souveraineté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).
5. See Roxanne L. Euben, "Spectacles of Sovereignty in Digital Time," *Perspectives on Politics, 15(4)* (2017, December), pp. 1007–1033; and Jukka Ruohonen, "The Treachery of Images in the Digital Sovereignty Debate," *Minds and Machines, 31*(2021), 439–456.

DGR01 Understanding Player Experiences

PP 0098 How does the community spark? Network role and discourse function in Animal Crossing: New Horizons community

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Traditional models of online community formation often rely on linear teleologies, such as Tuckman's "forming-storming" sequence or Lave and Wenger's "Legitimate Peripheral Participation" (LPP), which assume a gradual evolution toward stability and core membership. However, recent scholarship challenges these container-based, evolutionary views, proposing instead that digital communities function as multi-space assemblages characterized by accelerated cyclicality. Notably, gaming communities often exist simultaneously across games, Discord, forums, and other platforms, using different tools as their needs change, which produces branching, overlapping community configurations rather than a single, bounded progression. To understand how gaming communities function as adaptive systems, this study examines the sociotechnical dynamics of the Animal Crossing: New Horizons (ACNH) Discord community, drawing on Adaptive Structuration Theory (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994) and Expectancy Violation Theory (Burgoon, 1993).

Methodologically, we employed a mixed-methods approach combining Social Network Analysis (SNA) with Structural Topic Modeling (STM) to examine the co-emergence of network roles and discourse functions in 15,245 messages from 1,229 users during its founding week (May 23–31, 2021). We constructed directed interpersonal interaction networks, calculating degree centrality, betweenness centrality, and in/out message ratios to classify users into network roles: Bridgers (4.1%), Generators (7.0%), Socializers (13.9%), and Peripherals (71.9%). STM analysis showed the discourse patterns of six community functions: knowledge sharing, community moderation, boundary work, solidarity and support, social grooming, and cultural production. By analyzing network role-discourse function interactions across time, we reveal the structural dynamics of community formation invisible to network analysis or discourse modeling alone.

Our analysis yields three findings that illustrate a recursive model. First, we observed immediate role structure crystallization rather than gradual evolution. The absence of significant Role-Day interactions indicates that functional hierarchies emerged swiftly through self-selection rather than socialization. Second, we redefine the "lurker" by validating the "Stable Peripheral" as a permanent, functional niche. Peripherals provided essential knowledge exchange and event coordination, challenging the deficit model of peripheral participation. Meanwhile, Bridgers dominated community moderation and cultural gatekeeping despite modest network centrality. Third, we identify "Affective Misalignment" as the primary driver of early attrition. We found that deleted users exhibited paradoxically higher engagement intensity and emotional labor (vulnerability disclosure) than retained users. Their departure resulted from a negative expectancy violation, where the community's instrumental capacity failed to reciprocate their affective investment, creating a reciprocity deficit during a period of heightened psychosocial need. Conversely, persistent users established multilayer relational portfolios spanning instrumental exchanges (game mechanics, trading networks) and affective practices (social grooming, daily life disclosure). These findings suggest that online communities are not developmental ladders but recursive assemblages, where success depends on the rapid alignment of individual affective needs with available sociotechnical infrastructures.

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DGR01 Understanding Player Experiences

PP 0099 "Thinking and feeling it out:" Applying the interactivity-as-demand model to formal playtesting of in-development AAA games

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The interactivity-as-demand framework (Bowman, 2018; 2021) examines how video game players make sense of the myriad demands on their cognitive, emotional, physical, and social faculties during game play. Broadly, the framework both (a) isolates and specifies discrete demands (e.g., cognitive demands associated with solving in-game challenges; emotional demands associated with player immersion in game-worlds and narratives; physical demands associated with control systems requiring gross and fine motor skill; social demands associated with interacting with human and non-player characters), and (b) specifies their mediating relationship between specific game features and focal gaming outcomes (for examples, see Wulf et al., 2019; Bowman et al., 2021; Lin et al., 2023; Vo et al., 2024).

User perception of these demands is essential to understanding user experiences in video games and has potential to improve the quality of playtesting data essential to game development (Viktorov, 2015). The interactivity-as-demand

framework is compelling insofar as it directly implicates the role of player perceptions in game engagement, demonstrating where and how players are "taking up" myriad game features in ways that compliment or hinder desired gaming outcomes. By identifying player demands of in-development video games, studios can more quickly understand the extent to which design intentions match player perceptions and adjust accordingly.

Collaborating with an AAA game studio, we analyzed recordings of 25 playtesting sessions across three soon-to-be-released video games. Sessions were between 90 minutes and two hours, followed by semi-structured interviews based on the interactivity-as-demand framework, analyzed via thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Across all three games, physical and social demands were minimal—aligning generally with the rather basic controls (mouse and keyboard or game controller) and single-player gaming formats. However, cognitive and emotional demand experiences varied between genres such that:

The puzzle/strategy game [anonymized, *n* = 7] elicited the highest cognitive demands, as participants described gameplay as planning and cerebral processing. Emotional demands were primarily connected to the fun of solving increasingly difficult puzzles.

For the action/platformer game [anonymized, *n* = 9], cognitive demands were also high, as participants focused on learning curves and timing coordination, along with developing plans for "boss fights." Emotional demands were low but did spike on occasion, oscillating between frustration and fun. For *n* = 8 players who played more than once, cognitive and emotional demands decreased steadily over time (e.g., across multiple interviews). Notably, players reported little connection to the in-game characters or narrative, focusing on game mechanics over game narrative.

For the ball-and-paddle game [anonymized, *n* = 7], participants' emotional demands dominated the cognitive demands of in-game challenges. Game mechanics were seen as uncomplicated and "straightforward," but participants felt that the game's intense music and visuals were overwhelming and discomforting. In-game "power-ups" were complicated, and the game's aesthetics made it difficult to focus on the game action itself (e.g., "where is the ball?").

Future research includes secondary analysis of recorded gameplay footage to synchronize with emergent themes, as well as interviews with game developers to see how playtesting data influenced in-progress game design. Replication is already planned across more in-development games for comparative analysis.

DGR01 Understanding Player Experiences

PP 0100 Validating the video game demand scale in Polish - Exploring demand perceptions and cross-worlds experiences among Polish gamers

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The Video Game Demand Scale (VGDS, Bowman et al., 2018) operationalizes the interactivity-as-demand framework by measuring players' perceptions of cognitive, emotional, physical (controller and exertional), and social demands during gameplay. While VGDS has been successfully validated across multiple languages - German (Koban & Bowman, 2020), Mandarin (Bowman et al., 2021), Turkish (Kosa & Bowman, 2023), Korean (Lee et al., 2023), and Spanish (Lee et al., 2025), no Polish-language version exists. This validation is particularly warranted given Poland's prominent position in the European gaming market. The Polish gaming industry generated over €1 293M in 2024 (PARP; "The Game Industry of Poland Report 2025"), with approximately 16 million active players representing nearly half the population ("Global Power of Play 2025"). Despite this substantial market presence, Polish gamers remain underrepresented in international research (Linxen et al., 2021). While Poland shares many characteristics with Western European countries, distinctive cultural patterns relevant to video games— a robust LAN-party culture, strong offline gaming communities, and pronounced national pride in successful Polish development studios (e.g., CD Projekt Red, Techland) warrant investigation.

We want to present a cross-sectional online survey study (N = 260–300), currently in progress, employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design to validate a proposed VGDS-PL. The quantitative component will establish measurement validity through confirmatory factor analysis, alongside the validity tests, following protocols from previous VGDS validations. The study incorporates two distinctive qualitative components extending beyond traditional psychometric validation. First, following the Spanish-language validation approach (Lee et al., 2025), participants will explain in their own words how they understand each demand dimension. This allows verification that Polish gamers interpret VGDS constructs as intended, while also identifying potential culturally driven reinterpretations or nuanced shifts in meaning. Second, we introduce an exploratory investigation of cross-worlds experiences - the phenomenon of transferring experiences, relationships, knowledge, and identities between game worlds and everyday reality (CITE?) Participants will respond to open-ended questions examining social boundary crossing between online and offline relationships, gaming's influence on daily life and skill development and integration of gamer identity with real-world self-concept. This investigation draws on established concepts - games as "third places" (Steinkuehler & Williams, 2006), avatar-player identity blending (Banks, 2015), and game transfer phenomena. As with prior VGDS work, all materials, data, and analysis code will be openly shared following Open Science principles.

Mixed-methods integration will enable triangulation between quantitative demand-outcome correlations and qualitative descriptions of mechanisms, complementarity between standardized measures and rich contextual accounts. This work provides important contributions to digital games and HCI scholarship. Methodologically, it provides direct replication while extending empirical scope to non-WEIRD populations underrepresented in HCI scholarship broadly (Linxen et al., 2018) . Theoretically, it tests the cross-cultural validity of the interactivity-as-demand framework, while exploring the cross-worlds phenomena in the context of specific demand types. Practically, it delivers a validated assessment tool for Polish researchers and game industry professionals. Finally, by systematically documenting Polish gaming experiences, this work contributes to a more complete, globally representative understanding of player psychology.

DGR01 Understanding Player Experiences

PP 0101 Gaming in a shifting life situation. A quantitative study on digital game usage and gaming motivations of young people with cancer

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A cancer diagnosis and treatment can be one of the most pressing challenges, disrupting one's life in various aspects, including activity restrictions, impact on social life, and emotional coping (Sodergren et al., 2018). In times of physical limitation, isolation, and mental distress due to the illness, video games can be a helpful resource for many people. Various studies examined the impact of digital games in the context of cancer: They can provide entertainment and distraction for those affected (e.g., Steineck et al., 2022), enable social interaction even while being in physical isolation, and help the development of personal skills and one's identity (e.g., de la Hera & Sanz, 2021). In terms of active video games, gaming can improve physical activity (e.g., Swartz et al., 2022), and regarding serious games about cancer, it can educate players and raise awareness of the illness (e.g., Khalil et al., 2016). However, most studies focus on children or older adults, with young adults (18–39 years) often being overlooked. So far, there has been no examination of how people with cancer in this age group use digital games.

In the present study, an online survey was conducted between 2022 and 2023. Via social media posts, a total of $N = 190$ participants, young people with cancer ($n = 91$) and healthy peers ($n = 99$) were recruited. The questions included gaming preferences regarding platform, genre and specific game titles, reception and production of livestreams and let's plays, as well as game motivations related to social interaction, genre, skills & progress, game world and reality (cf., Bartle, 1996; Hunicke et al., 2004; Yee, 2006; Sherry et al., 2006; Kallio et al., 2011).

The findings demonstrate significant differences between healthy players and those affected by cancer, with the latter showing a preference for less action and social interaction in the gameplay, while being drawn more to mobile games and consoles, as well as games that require logic and concentration. Overall, the illness, for those participants who have been affected by cancer, did not lead to less time spent gaming. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how young people with cancer use digital games, which can help improve their gaming experience in the future (e.g., more inclusive and target group-oriented game development).

DGR01 Understanding Player Experiences

PP 0102 Between empowerment and constraints: Understanding the promise of video games in women's lives

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This study investigates the extent to which video games can change women's lives and empower them, exploring how video games play a role in identity formation, social connection, and cultural participation. Current research outlines gaming as a space that empowers women by highlighting opportunities for identity exploration, social belonging, and skill development (Lopez-Fernandez et al., 2019). Both online and offline gaming environments offer women new spaces to challenge gender norms and claim visibility within an industry shaped by masculine norms.

At the same time, feminist and critical media scholars caution against overstating the video game's empowering power for women by highlighting the structural issues that limit this power. Video games may bring individual empowerment and a sense of belonging, yet they may also simultaneously reproduce broader structural inequalities related to race, class, and gender (Gray, 2014; Nakamura, 2009). In this context, while women's representation has been drawing much more attention, it is often shaped by market logics that favour surface-level diversity over substantive structural change (Shaw, 2015). Similarly, diversity initiatives primarily remain market-based strategies for success and mostly place the responsibility on the shoulders of individuals rather than institutions and social conditions (Harvey & Fisher, 2014). Under such conditions, inclusion and women's visibility risk becoming a narrative of empowerment that is folded into corporate diversity agendas, leaving entrenched inequities largely untouched.

Recognising both the benefits and limitations of video games in women's lives, this paper examines how video games influence women's lives and gender relations by focusing on both video game environments and industry conditions. While digital play is frequently framed as a site of innovation and empowerment, this study questions whether these spaces

truly challenge gender hierarchies or implicitly continue these issues in order to reach wider audiences. To examine these questions, the study employs semi-structured, in-depth interviews that ask participants to reflect on their lived experiences within video game environments and the broader industry. By conceptually distinguishing between individual and structural change, the paper critically analyses whether innovation in video games contributes to meaningful progress in gender equality and societal values, or merely sustains longstanding disparities under the rhetoric of personal empowerment.

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DGR02 Problematic and Risky Aspects of Gaming

PP 0203 Gaming, gambling, and crypto: Masculinity and risk perception

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One topic that has received increased attention over the past decade is the integration of gambling-like elements in video games, especially in the form of so-called loot boxes (Zendle et al. 2019, Xiao et al. 2020). Parallel to the gradual blurring of the boundaries between gaming and gambling, a convergence is taking place in parts of the media sector and gaming culture. This is particularly visible on digital platforms such as Twitch and YouTube, where influencers and streamers increasingly publish both gaming-related and gambling-related content. Twitch, originally a platform for streaming video games, now hosts a substantial amount of gambling streams.

American and European studies show that teenage boys and young men spend nearly five times as much time on games and that gaming plays a central part of male identity (Jørgensen and Lindtner 2024, Karlsen 2013). The aim of the project is to investigate how the blending of gaming, gambling, and financial speculation manifests within male culture. The primary focus is on boys and young men aged 16–24. This age group was chosen to study a life stage in which young men transition from economic dependence on their parents to taking independent responsibility for their own finances. The analysis will consist of two datasets: interviews with boys and men aged 16–24, and a selection of live-stream recordings from YouTube and Twitch, subject to a discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003). The project will examine the following research questions:

RQ1: How do boys and young men describe their experiences with digital arenas and livestreaming where gaming, gambling, and cryptocurrency speculation take place?

RQ2: How do Norwegian influencers contribute to normalizing the connection between gaming, gambling, and financial risk-taking among boys and young men?

The study is in its initial stage with preliminary findings from the streaming material. These findings indicate that influencers frequently discuss and model risk-taking behaviors, including high-stakes gaming, betting, and cryptocurrency speculation. Their commentary often frames these activities as exciting, socially rewarding, and aspirational, potentially shaping viewers' perceptions of acceptable financial risk. Viewers actively participate in chats, providing real-time feedback, encouragement, or tips related to gambling and speculative activities. This interaction appears to foster a sense of community around high-risk behaviors.

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DGR02 Problematic and Risky Aspects of Gaming

PP 0204 Why we game matters: The role of gameplay motives in engaging with gambling-like elements in and around video games

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Gambling has been entering the world of video games, resulting in an early engagement with gambling-like elements in and around video games. Examples include skin betting, eSports betting, and loot boxes. As there is some evidence that engaging with these elements could lead to gambling in adolescents (Grosemans et al., 2025; Hayer et al., 2018), it is important to explore the drivers behind this engagement. In this light, we explore the connection between video gaming motives and gambling-like engagement in and around video games. In the past, motives such as escapism and competition have been shown to predict problematic video gaming (Király et al., 2023). However, research on the connection between these motives and gambling-like gaming is lacking.

684 Dutch-speaking adolescents (ages 16–19, mean age = 16.62, SD = 0.66; 54.93% male) took part in a school survey in October-December 2025 on video gaming motives (measured by the Motives for Online Gaming Questionnaire; Demetrovics et al., 2011) and gambling-like engagement in and around video games ("free" engagement: opening of free loot boxes, watching loot box openings, watching gambling streams, and spinning prize wheels; and "paid" engagement: paying for loot boxes, eSports betting, skin betting, paying for items in social casino games). The study received ethical consent beforehand (anonymized). Three multiple regression models were computed in RStudio, in which video gaming motives (social motives, escapism, competition, coping, skill development, fantasy, and fun) were entered as independent variables, next to gender as a control variable, and gambling-like engagement as dependent variable (all activities in the first model, free activities in the second model, and paid activities in the third model). In the first model, social motives ($\beta = .09$), escapism ($\beta = .16$), competition ($\beta = .09$), and video gaming for fun ($\beta = .18$) significantly predicted gambling-like engagement (all $p < .05$; adjusted $R2 = .23$). Next to that, in the second model, escapism ($\beta = .17$) and fun ($\beta = .23$) predicted free gambling-like engagement (all $p < .001$; adjusted $R2 = .23$). Regarding paid gambling-like engagement (third model), social motives ($\beta = .14$) and competition ($\beta = .09$) were significant predictors (all $p < .05$, adjusted $R2 = 0.08$). Gender was a significant predictor in all models, with boys scoring higher on gambling-like engagement than girls (all $p < .001$). Longitudinal research is needed to discern the direction of effects, and to study whether free gambling-like engagement could lead to paid engagement in the long run.

In conclusion, different types of video gaming motives could predict different types of gambling-like gaming in and around video games. While escapism and video gaming for fun could predict free gambling-like engagement, social motives and competition predict paid gambling-like engagement. It could therefore be of importance to not only look at video gaming behavior itself when researching the effects of gambling-like engagement, but also at why adolescents play video games.

DGR02 Problematic and Risky Aspects of Gaming

PP 0205 Playing Fortnite: The relevance of different types of literacy for purposeful engagement with a gaming metaverse

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Contemporary video games have evolved into metaverse-like ecosystems where social play, entertainment, participatory culture, and complex in-game economies converge. In such platformized environments, user-generated content (UGC) plays a central role, while gaming activities extend to game-adjacent platforms (e.g., Discord and Twitch). The creation of UGC – whether in-game content or a stream on Twitch – is often marketed with the promise that users can monetize their creativity. This blurs the boundaries between play, labour, and consumption under the logic of digital capitalism. While metaverse-like gaming spaces offer opportunities for connection, they expose players to financial risks. Fortnite serves as a prime example of this development. In our study, we adopt a literacy perspective to understand how different types of literacy prepare gamers to navigate the universe of Fortnite.

We focus on the roles of New Media Literacy (NML), as a specific type of media literacy, and Economic Literacy (ECL) as a more general competence related to the economic aspects of games such as Fortnite. NML encompasses functional and critical competencies in both consumption and prosumption, and while prior research has largely applied NML to journalistic content or general social media, we test its relevance for a metaverse-like game. Additionally, we employ a definition of ECL involving knowledge of economic systems and responsible decision-making.

Our empirical study then tests whether these two types of literacies help players mitigate risks (monetary spending) and realize positive outcomes, specifically Fortnite-specific Social Capital and economic profit. As an empirical basis, we conducted an online survey with Fortnite players in Germany (max. N = 275), measuring weekly playtime, expenditures, income, and literacy levels. Using hierarchical regression analysis, we reveal the ambivalent role of the two types of literacy.

Results confirm that higher playtime predicts higher expenditure. However, ECL acts as a crucial buffer, significantly attenuating this link. In contrast, NML demonstrates a complex interaction: while it lowers spending directly, high NML combined with high playtime increases expenditure. This suggests that highly literate "prosumers" may invest financial capital to fuel their participation. Regarding positive outcomes, NML positively predicts bonding Social Capital, whereas ECL is negatively related to bridging Social Capital. Notably, despite the presence of a few top earners in our sample, neither literacy predicted economic profit generally.

Our study faces limitations regarding high dropout rates and a sample skewed toward highly engaged, male players, reflecting the specific difficulty of recruiting players who had spent money within platformized environments. We conclude with a) a discussion on the perspectives for conducting user-centred research in a gaming context, and b) an elaboration on further methodological aspects, such as non-linear moderation effects and reciprocal dynamics between literacy, social capital, and expenditure. These aspects may better explain the complex impact of different types of literacy on gaming behaviour. As an outlook, we raise the question: Can different types of literacy effectively protect users against the vast power asymmetries of platform capitalism, or do they merely facilitate deeper integration into its commercial logic?

DGR02 Problematic and Risky Aspects of Gaming

PP 0206 The exploitation of incivility. Performing negative emotions as a mean of audience engagement in game video content on Twitch and YouTube

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In the attention economy (Terranova 2012) that characterizes the current media system – particularly the digital platforms ecosystem – the study of incivility as a strategic resource to attract (and retain) the audience interest has mainly focused on political communication (Muddiman et al. 2017; Bentivegna, Rega 2024), highlighting how behaviors and language associated with an aggressive and even violent discursive style align with one of the core values of the media logic – that of entertainment. Building on these premises, and drawing on research from different media environments, this contribution aims to investigate how frustration and rage, key elements of the flow experience in specific videogame genres (Csìkszentmihályi, 1997; Juul 2013), can be exploited by Twitch streamers and YouTube content creators.

The research develops from previous studies on how the gamer communities support each other through social media (Gee, 2005; Robinson et al., 2023) and shifts the focus on streamers who deliberately ignore the advice of their audiences, intentionally increasing the difficulty of the games, to enable the performance of violent acts of frustration and rage. We consider this performance as relational, affective and emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012; Baym, 2015; Johnson & Woodcock, 2019) that the streamers need to perform to keep the viewers engaged. Furthermore, in a peer-to-peer environment (Kreissl et al., 2021) like Twitch and YouTube, these acts enhance the streamers' perceived authenticity (Anderson, 2017; Postigo, 2021), strengthening the relationships with their audience. We also examine the digital labor performed by some viewers to shift their social status from simple audience member to "affiliated" content creator by freebooting[1] live moments for their own YouTube channels, gaining recognition by the live streamers and their community (Marwick, 2015; Raun, 2018; Jackson, 2020).

We adopt a netnographic approach, focusing on a comparative analysis of two types of YouTube channels: six "official" freebooting channels that reupload edited Twitch streams of Italian content creators, generally perceived as well-mannered yet nonetheless display sudden or recurrent outbursts when playing rage-inducing games; and four multilingual channels that upload playlists compiling rage moments from different gaming streamers. The resulting dataset, comprising approximately two Video on Demand from each channel, will support a multimodal discourse analysis (Andersson, 2024) examining both the audiovisual dimensions of game-related content and the interactive affordances of the platforms. This includes: examining the embodied movements and the read, read-aloud, and respond mechanisms (Reed, 2024) afforded by Twitch, through which rage can be identified as sporadic and intentional performance enacted by the streamer in response to live gameplay and chat comments; analysing conversations in the YouTube comment sections to understand the type of engagement generated by rage, frustration and incivility in game video content. Comparing these different kinds of freebooting channels highlights how this practice exploits the affective and emotional streamer labor through the spread of memetic media (Jackson, 2020) to foster a vicious cycle of incivility and a virtuous cycle of engagement between platforms.

1. Freebooting is the act of posting other people's original content online for personal gain, without permission of the content creator (Urban Dictionary).

DGR03 Games Between Industry, AI, and Platformization

PP 0316 Shifting grounds of game journalism: Role orientations, platformization, and professional challenges in German-speaking media

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Game journalism has become a key interface between cultural reporting, technology communication, and participatory platform labor, yet its working conditions remain underexplored—especially in European contexts. Building on the Game Journalism Field Model (Bigl, 2023) and a communicative-ecology perspective grounded in field theory (Bourdieu, 1993), this paper examines how people who report on games in German-speaking media navigate shifting professional boundaries under platformization (Nieborg & Poell, 2018) and journalism's broader post-institutional transformation (Deuze & Witschge, 2018; Nieborg & Foxman, 2016).

We draw on a sequential mixed-method design. First, 16 semi-structured interviews with journalists and creators portrayed in 2025 game journalism as a profession marked by informal entry routes, autodidactic skill acquisition, and continuous boundary work vis-à-vis PR, fandom, and influencer cultures. Respondents frame legitimacy through cultural mediation ("journalism about games, not fan journalism") and treat transparency and credibility as professional currencies. At the same time, they describe persistent tension between editorial standards and platform pressure, as well as precarity and access dependence (review conditions, embargoes). The qualitative analysis identified four recurring role orientations: Cultural Translator, Public Service Specialist, Independent Analyst, and Participatory Mediator (Bigl, 2025).

Second, the study at hand now reports findings from an ongoing anonymous online survey. Because no directory of game journalists or game-related creators exists, recruitment follows a snowball strategy: approximately 120 editorial teams and outlets were contacted and asked to forward the invitation to relevant staff and collaborators, which also explains the extended field period. As of 8 January 2026, 42 completed cases are available (indicative only). Among respondents, Top-2-box agreement (4–5 on a 1–5 scale; averaged per role) is highest for the Public Service Specialist (70%) and Cultural Translator (60%), followed by the Independent Analyst (50%) and Participatory Mediator (40%). Platformization indicators are pronounced: 70% agree that visibility fluctuates strongly without their own doing. Future-oriented challenge items show concern about structural dependencies on advertising/cooperations/platforms, 90% agree that reach is only partly planable due to platform mechanisms, and 80% perceive games as still insufficiently recognized as cultural goods. Notably, none expresses optimism that the field will professionally develop.

Overall, game journalism is conceptualized as a "shifting ground" profession whose legitimacy is increasingly negotiated between cultural expertise, platform governance, and hybridized roles. Given the questionnaire's scope (33 questions), fieldwork remains open; a final sample of n = 150 is expected by April 2026, enabling more robust mapping of role profiles, platformization, and perceived challenges across organizational settings.

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DGR03 Games Between Industry, AI, and Platformization

PP 0317 Between stability and sustainability: How foreign workers evaluate the Czech game industry

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This paper is part of my dissertation project and presents the evaluations of the Czech game industry among its international workers. The evaluations include the internationals' motivations for coming into the Czech game industry, their assessments of the local production ecosystem and its future. The study draws on three rounds of longitudinal semi-structured interviews conducted between 2022 and 2024 with 28 respondents: 14 from Central Eastern Europe, 12 from Western Europe, 1 from South America, and 1 from North America. Largely, the respondents were juniors and worked as artists, game designers, or programmers at 10 bigger game studios (with 50+ employees). The longitudinal approach allowed for tracing changes in internationals' perceptions over time, capturing their evolving assessments of working conditions, and

the future sustainability of the Czech game industry. Foreign game developers in Czechia remain underrepresented in research, despite constituting one-third of the workforce in Czech game production (GDACZ, 2025).

International workers have diverse motivations for coming into the Czech game industry, shaped by prior professional experience, dissatisfaction with precarious labour markets elsewhere, and the perceived stability of Czech game studios and Czech society. Many respondents value the relatively dense ecosystem of successful studios in Czechia, which enables circulation between employers and offers career security in an otherwise volatile global game industry.

Nevertheless, this stability also constitutes the challenge of the Czech game industry and one of its paradoxical qualities. Specifically, the findings highlight a diversity–meritocracy paradox (Deuze, 2025; Konrad et al., 2021) in which stability and business success are prioritized at the expense of inclusive and innovative practices. While workforce diversity is formally welcomed, respondents report that their creative input is sidelined once it challenges entrenched production logics or managerial hierarchies.

Regarding futures, international workers articulate ambivalent assessments of the Czech game industry's sustainability. While acknowledging its current economic resilience—particularly in contrast to widespread global layoffs—they frame the Czech game industry as less competitive in the long run due to creative stagnation, concentration of profits in a small number of studios, and limited emergence of new startups. While resistance to change in Czech game production is seen as uncreative, innovation to new products might be risky and destructive, as it might challenge existing hierarchies and disregard the contextual practices that facilitated local achievements (Bilton, 2015). On the other hand, foreigners often see Czech game production as "too stable" and call for diversification in production.

With state funding for video games in Czechia on the way, there are current discussions on how to make the Czech game industry more diversified by financing smaller studios and startups. However, to make local game development sustainable and retain the foreign workforce, changes should also follow in bigger studios. By foregrounding international workers' evaluations, the paper positions them as essential actors for understanding the shifting grounds of the Czech game industry in its transformation from an industry dominated by a few industry hegemons to a more diversified production space.

DGR03 Games Between Industry, AI, and Platformization

PP 0318 Copyright intelligence prosthethics: The illusion of authorship protection in video games during the AI revolution

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If three authors design a deep-learning algorithm's architecture, ten implement its code, eighteen graphic artists develop user stories for prompts, design engineers formulate those prompts, and the algorithm's training dataset contains images and photographs of eighty million users—why is it still possible to appropriate authorship of St. Mark's Square in Rome?

This presentation examines the principal domains of artificial intelligence application in digital games, focusing on the growing tension between technologically distributed creative processes and traditional legal concepts of authorship. It highlights the conceptual, doctrinal, and practical difficulties involved in formulating an adequate definition of authorship under conditions of AI-assisted and AI-driven production. Particular attention is paid to the unstable and often contested relationships between creators, performers, and publishers across different legal regimes, as well as to the unresolved issue of recognizing authorship attributed to entities other than natural persons.

Drawing on doctrinal legal analysis, case studies of transnational and internal legal disputes, and expert interviews with game producers and publishers, the paper reconstructs the complex and inherently ephemeral industry consensus that governs authorship practices in the video game sector. This informal consensus frequently operates alongside—and at times in open tension with—existing formal legal frameworks, filling regulatory gaps through contractual practice, professional norms, and risk-management strategies rather than statutory clarity.

The presentation pursues two complementary objectives. First, it offers a forward-looking assessment of the evolving legal landscape of the global video game market in the context of rapidly advancing AI technologies. Second, it formulates normative proposals addressing three key areas of computer game copyright law that present significant challenges for contemporary legislators and courts: (1) the need for an explicit legal position on recognizing authorship by non-human agents or systems; (2) the development of workable authorship criteria in the context of "dispersed auteurship," where creative agency is fragmented across large, heterogeneous production teams and automated systems; and (3) the guarantee of access to specialized legal expertise in computer game law for the judiciary, in order to ensure informed and consistent adjudication.

The presentation integrates perspectives from the law of new technologies, copyright law, and digital culture studies, informed by the author's professional experience as a video game producer, thereby combining theoretical analysis with industry-grounded insight

DGR03 Games Between Industry, AI, and Platformization

PP 0319 Generative AI in game design: Game industry professionals' perceptions and experiences

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There is a long and close connection between so-called artificial intelligence, automated algorithms and game design. After all, practically all digital games utilize the power of automated algorithms themselves, from those that help build game worlds to computer-controlled opponents to algorithms that dynamically adjust the flow of gameplay. However, game design, like most fields of knowledge-intensive and creative work, has only recently been introduced to the affordances of generative AI (GenAI). GenAI is an umbrella term used to describe generative models that, once trained, produce new data. For example, many GenAI models leverage the power of transformer neural networks in generating new content that often emulates human-created output (see e.g., Bordas et al., 2024). GenAI applications include e.g. art generation tools, and tools for writing, editing and even for coding.

While the long-term impact of GenAI tools is yet to be seen, it is clear that they have made an entrance into different creative fields such as advertising and marketing (Anantrasirichai & Bull, 2021), and game development (Werning 2024) in the early 2020s. Indeed, Anantrasirichai and Bull (2021, p. 590) assert that AI is applied more frequently in games and immersive experiences, alongside with advertising and marketing, than in any other creative domains.

Our study contributes to the emerging understanding of the role of GenAI in creative industries by analyzing how professionals involved in game design and production describe and make sense of GenAI. Our data comprises ten semi-structured interviews and one group interview collected in 2024, and five semi-structured interviews and one group interview collected in 2025. The professionals taking part in these interviews come from several European countries, and represent various roles within game design companies. Based on the principles of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2022), our analysis illustrates the potential use cases of GenAI for game design, as well as the doubts and shortcomings games industry professionals link to it. Interview data always focuses on experiences and perceptions, as well as the discursive strategies through which people make sense of the world around them. Analyzing the way games industry professionals perceive and talk about GenAI is crucial in understanding their underlying attitudes towards this new technology.

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DGR04 Analyzing Games and Play

PP 0435 The alternate realities of Baldur's Gate 3: Non-human creatures, voice and recognition as moral contexts in digital fantasy games

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Within digital games, the traditional role of the animal is the role of a monster (and at times even non-human animals such as the wolf or bear) to slay or run away from (Johansson & Rübsamen 2024). This presents a dichotomous relationship between the representation of the animal and the human-animal interactions, in which the player is often left with few choices in how to act. In many open-world fantasy games, the animal is often placed in a 'natural' environment, but as a gameplay element it's restricted to few functions, being an obstacle or source of loot for the player. Scholars have increasingly pointed to that "digital animal violence is morally problematic" (Coghlan & Sparrow 2021), as it potentially reflects human attitudes towards non-human animals in other cultural contexts.

The fantasy video game *Baldur's Gate 3*, offers an alternative: Through the games magic system, interactions with non-human creatures presents another layer through the ability to use magic in order to converse with monsters. In this paper, we pose the question of how giving voice to fantasy creatures, often perceived as monsters or dangerous non-human animals, opens up new dimensions of moral interactions within the game. This presentation explores the ways the different interactions with monsters and animals are presented in *Baldur's Gate 3*, as a way to experience moral obligations towards digital animals. As such, this is an investigation into considerations around "how a game's ideology might be communicated through its rules" (Baerg 2025:310).

Through the act of "voice", as discussed by Couldry (2010), recognition is given to the existence of monsters showing that morals is not only a question of choice, but also of ability and visibility. The game thus actively presents a way for the player give recognition to the non-human creature's voice, which is in many ways a moral act. Within the ideology of the game, our main question focuses on how voice and recognition function as opportunities to explore contexts where voice is not a given.

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DGR04 Analyzing Games and Play

PP 0436 From quests to story arcs: A dynamic and validated framework for procedural narrative generation in video games

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This article constitutes the second part of a research project devoted to an original conceptual framework for procedural storytelling in video games. While the first publication focused on the foundational aspects of the system, including a five-layer architecture encompassing culture, world, non-player characters, simple quests, and textual units, the present study extends this model by introducing two key components: a dynamic architecture for story arc generation and an advanced content validation module. In the first part of the paper, the author presents mechanisms that enable a shift from generating single, isolated quests to complex narrative structures operating at the macro level. Drawing on Seymour Chatman's distinction between story and discourse (1978), the system implements algorithms for dynamically allocating narrative threads within the game space. The newly introduced architectural layer enables the binding of narrative instances to specific locations and regions defined in the previous model. In this way, the system aims to address the limitations of large language models in maintaining long-term narrative coherence, as identified by Nasir, James, and Togelius (2024) and Zhou et al. (2025). The study also builds upon the classical work of Riedl and Young (2010) on narrative planning, aiming to balance plot structure with the autonomy of character actions in a procedurally generated world. The second part of the article is dedicated to the design of a narrative validator. This tool functions as a critical module responsible for verifying the integrity and logical relationships between generated narrative instances. The validator automatically checks the factual consistency of generated texts against the world database, directly addressing challenges identified in the preliminary phase of the research. A central component of the validator is a sensitive content editing module. Based on the guidelines of Short and Adams (2017) concerning the design of dramaturgy and conflict, this module enables parametric adaptation of generated content to different age groups. The system filters content with respect to violence, vulgarity, and stereotypes, while preserving narrative depth by allowing credible in-world conflicts, provided they remain consistent with the established design assumptions. In conclusion, the presented research demonstrates that extending the conceptual framework with dynamic story arcs and a validation system significantly reduces the so-called authorial bottleneck (Spierling and Szilas, 2009). At the same time, the study demonstrates that the resulting system remains highly cost-effective compared to traditional narrative content production methods, while maintaining the scalability required for contemporary open-world games. This work completes the transition from a theoretical structuralist model to a functional tool supporting modern game design.

DGR04 Analyzing Games and Play

PP 0437 Are you playing with me? A systematic literature review on the attitudes and actions of play

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How are playful attitudes in relation to serious and ludic actions studied in academia? Throughout the last decades, the ludification of culture has been analyzed from different perspectives. Concepts such as gamification or edutainment show the impact and effectiveness of using ludic elements in serious contexts. However, studies on the attitude of play without a clear activity of play are limited, reducing the concept of playfulness to specific areas, such as entertainment and digital games.

This paper presents a systematic literature review on empirical and theoretical academic works that deal with the concept of playfulness. The main objective is to explore the understanding of 'playful attitudes' in ludic and serious contexts, to link it to the concepts of play as activity and the activity of play, and to identify patterns that describe how the attitude of play is examined from a communicational aspect.

As theoretical framework, two main works will be used to operationalize the study: Sicart's understanding of playfulness ("a physical, psychological and emotional attitude towards things, people and situations"), and the activity of play (a finite set of actions, with a specific purpose). Secondly, Caillois' concepts of *paidia* (spontaneous action) and *ludus* (rule-driven game) will be applied to code the (playful and non-playful) actions presented in the studies analyzed. In this respect, games are understood as a form of playfulness.

The review collects empirical and theoretical papers indexed in Scopus and the Web of Science. By following the PRISMA statement, and after applying specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, 46 documents were retrieved and studied by using an inductive and deductive approach.

Data was analyzed using thematic analysis in which the initial coding phase was centered on the identification of the topic analyzed, context, form of playfulness, relation to other concepts (ludic and non-ludic), and type of interaction. The data was coded, studied and clustered to identify the focus points in this debate, focused on the use and understanding of playful attitudes in ludic and serious contexts and the link to the concept of play as action.

The initial results show that playful attitudes studies are commonly conveyed through the activity of play, more specifically through games. Common areas that are explored through qualitative analysis are related to game studies, education (and playful learning, linked to game design) and health (concretely, psychology). These studies tend to explore play from *ludus*, however spontaneous actions are also studied.

Secondly, the results also presented a group of studies related to playful attitudes through actions related to unexplored spaces, such as literature, magic tricks or religion. These works study attitudes through different actions, not always related to play, and are commonly identified as *paidia*.

These preliminary results show that it is important to focus on a broader perspective regarding play studies, where the attitude of play can be conveyed through non-playful activities. The field of play should be expanded beyond solely games and venture into the realm of communication, interaction and persuasion.

DGR04 Analyzing Games and Play

PP 0438 Making culture playable: A game analysis of youth-developed games in a Cultural Game Jam

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Young people have increasingly distanced themselves from traditional forms of cultural consumption, such as books, museums, and theatre, in favour of digital media such as social media and video games (Weingartner, 2021). Rather than signalling a decline in cultural engagement, this trend reflects a reconfiguration of cultural practices within a context of digitization and changing socioeconomic constraints (Valtysson, 2022; Vicari & Kirby, 2023).

The present research sought to analyse how young people engage with cultural production through digital game-making, through the analysis of game prototypes created during a Cultural Game Jam (CGJ) as a case study. CGJs are an emerging form of Serious Game Jam (Aibara et al., 2022), where participants design game prototypes inspired by cultural heritage (Author1 et al, 2025), based on the Quadruple Helix innovation model (Carayannis and Campbell, 2022; Schütz et al., 2019), place-based environments where cultural innovation is co-created by four sectors: higher education, cultural heritage institutions, creative industries, and youth citizens, organized and developed in the context of Project XXXX. The CGJ took place from April 29th to May 2nd of 2024 in XXXX, with the theme "Sustainability and Biodiversity- XXXX Lagoon", and a total of 40 participants, including 25 university students from a videogames course and 15 high school students, aged 15–25, M = 19.0 years (SD = 2.63).

The objective of the CGJ was to develop game prototypes that meaningfully integrated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 14 (Life Below Water) and 15 (Life on Land) as core cultural values.

Participants attended workshops about the theme given by cultural facilitators, such as local marine biologists and professors, and visited the lagoon two weeks before the event. Participants stayed in XXXX for the duration of the game jam, forming eleven groups. Each group produced one game prototype, subsequently analysed by two researchers.

For the game analysis, a research-based instrument was developed within the framework of Project XXXX. The instrument drew on the researcher's expertise to contextualise the evaluation and comprised both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended items employed a Likert scale to generate quantitative data across six dimensions: Topic Incorporation, Topic Learning, Visuals, Storytelling, Mechanics, and Enjoyability. Open-ended questions were included to elicit more nuanced qualitative feedback on learning outcomes, social issues, and the ways in which the games function as cultural artefacts.

Results show several games accomplished this goal. The Game_Name, the highest ranked game across all the analysis' dimensions, provided interesting gameplay and learning opportunities about the local fauna of the XXXX Lagoon, while increasing awareness of issues such as water pollution and environmental conservatorship. Lower rated games had issues implementing the mentioned SDGs in meaningful ways. In conclusion, although participants demonstrated the capacity to conceptualise cultural game narratives, these were not fully realised in the final prototypes. This finding underscores the complexity of game creation. Nevertheless, the development of cultural games addressing the specificities of a lagoon was achievable within the limited timeframe of a game jam due to the Quadruple Helix partners' collective commitment to co-creation.

DGR05 Games and Society

PP 0546 Mapping digital game practices in Romanian county libraries: A thematic content analysis of online communication

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This article examines the diversity of digital games used in Romanian county libraries in 2025 by analysing Facebook posts, website content, and local press articles. Although public libraries are traditionally known as spaces for reading, lending, and social interaction, less is known about how they integrate digital games into their everyday activities. To address this gap, the study investigates the online communication of all county libraries using a qualitative approach based on thematic content analysis, with the aim of identifying whether and how these cultural institutions employ digital games, what types of games are used, the formats in which they are integrated, and the target groups they address. The analysis has two stages: the first provides a general mapping of the presence of digital games in the public communication of all county libraries; the second consists of an in-depth thematic content analysis of five libraries that displayed the highest frequency and diversity of digital game-based activities. Among these, two county libraries operate makerspaces, one hosts a Smart Lab, and two run Code Kids programs. The findings reveal significant differences between libraries. Some institutions consistently integrate digital games into their programs—particularly within coding and digital education activities—using platforms such as Scratch, Kahoot!, Quizizz, code.org, AppInventor, Flappy Bird (educational versions), Tinkercad Games, Hour of Code, Minecraft, or other game-based learning tools employed in initiatives such as Code Kids, Makerspace and Smart Lab. Other libraries use digital games only occasionally, while some do not mention them at all in their public communication. The identified activities are primarily aimed at children and adolescents and are embedded in thematic workshops, programming clubs, or educational events. The results highlight unequal access to digital technologies, differences in institutional priorities, and varying levels of initiative in adopting digital games. By offering the first systematic mapping of digital game practices in Romanian county libraries, the study offers a clearer understanding of how they integrate digital play into their activities and broader the discussions on the role of libraries within the digital education. In addition to this, the in-depth analysis of the five selected libraries illustrates how the use of digital games can enhance the service offerings of county libraries, helping them better engage younger generations and reshape the image and purpose of these institutions within a rapidly changing society.

Keywords

digital games; public libraries; online communication; thematic content analysis; game-based learning; Romania

DGR05 Games and Society

PP 0547 Games analysis, transforming pixels into plates: Harnessing game strategies for sustainable food practices

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The purpose of this study is to explore how game strategies are used in digital games to promote sustainable food habits. This study is part of Horizon's ANONYMISED research project, which aims to advance citizen-driven, gamification-supported approaches for transforming food consumption patterns toward healthy and sustainable practices.

Recent systematic literature reviews have explored the current academic discourse on using gamification strategies and serious games to encourage behavioral changes related to sustainable practices (Authors, In Prep; Chow et al.,; Lim et al., 2024; Mabalay, 2025). These reviews highlight that a universal approach is often ineffective in achieving desired outcomes (Nasirzadeh, 2024). Instead, the effectiveness of the use of digital games to promote sustainable behaviors appears to depend significantly on the specific characteristics of the target audience and the primary objectives of the strategy employed.

For example, Scaffolding strategies, like structured challenges and quests, effectively motivate individuals hesitant to change their behavior (Jones et al., 2014; Mitis et al., 2019). Tracking strategies enhance environmental responsibility and self-efficacy, as demonstrated in a gamified environmental conservation platform (Du et al., 2019). Cooperative strategies boost motivation for sustainable behavior, evidenced by a digital simulation game for sustainable development (Ivens et al., 2020). These findings underscore the importance of customizing digital game strategies to meet the specific needs

of target audiences, rather than adopting a universal approach. Understanding how digital games can foster sustainable food behaviors is crucial. However, a recent literature review (Authors, In Prep) indicates that most studies on food-related games focus on nutrition literacy or dietary changes, not sustainable food habits (Luhanga et al., 2016; Barwood et al., 2020; Okpanachi & Adaji). This study aims to address this gap by investigating how game mechanics and aesthetics are utilized in digital games to promote sustainable food habits. Our research question is: How are game mechanics and aesthetics used in digital games to encourage sustainable food practices?

We employed comprehensive sampling (Gray, 2004), meaning we examined each and every case we could find that matched the sampling criteria. Including: (1) games must address sustainable food practices; (2) considering the language proficiency of the researchers involved (Titles must be in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, or Dutch, or use no written/oral language); (3) they must be definable as games; and (4) at least partially digital. Games centered on quizzes and non-digital formats are excluded. A systematic online search with sustainability-related terms identifies suitable games.

We used Mäyrä's (2008) "utilitarian" analytical play approach to connect games to broader contexts and understand player communities, aiding in research question development. For analysis, we followed Fernández-Vara's (2024) thematic method to examine game strategies related to sustainability, identifying common strategies and their implementation.

While specific results are not yet available, the study is expected to reveal how digital games communicate food sustainability themes. By analyzing game mechanics/ aesthetics that promote sustainable food behaviors, the research aims to offer insights into using gaming to encourage sustainable habits. The findings are anticipated to guide future efforts in creating digital games with sustainability themes, supporting educational/ environmental goals.

DGR05 Games and Society

PP 0548 "It's just a hoax": Climate futures and climate change denial in civilization vi's Reddit communities

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Player communities have become key arenas where users negotiate the political meanings that games convey, especially when they address contested issues such as climate change. In ecogames, which model environmental issues through interactive systems with awareness-raising aims (op de Beke et al. 2024), these debates may reinforce in-game representations but also rework, contest, or satirise how environmental problems are staged. As a result, online platforms hosting these exchanges – such as forums, social media, and streaming services – become crucial spaces where ecological imaginaries and the epistemic authority of climate science are negotiated, challenged, and at times openly denied, with significant consequences for how shared environmental futures are imagined.

Against this backdrop, this contribution examines *Civilization VI: Gathering Storm* (Firaxis Games 2016) as a contested site for climate change denial within the wider ecology that includes the game itself and its paratextual extensions on Reddit (Consalvo 2017). The game foregrounds anthropogenic CO_2 emissions and their impacts, asking players to monitor atmospheric concentrations that rise with fossil fuel consumption and trigger more frequent and intense natural disasters, including floods, droughts, storms, and the permanent submersion of coastal tiles. Once specific CO_2 thresholds are crossed, these processes become irreversible, directly simulating real-world climate tipping points.

Methodologically, the study adopts Reddit as the main site of investigation due to its relatively weak moderation and persistent, highly politicised discussions (Massanari 2015). Eight subreddits were selected using queries combining "civilization", "gathering storm", "climate change" and "global warming", yielding a corpus of 616 comments posted between 2019 and 2020. After identifying recurrent words, bigrams, and trigrams, a semantic network analysis was conducted on terms co-occurring within a five-word window of "climate". On this basis, an inductive thematic analysis was carried out on a subset of comments to reconstruct users' dominant frames and narrative devices.

Findings show a strongly polarised discourse clustered around four nuclei. A first cluster frames climate change as a hoax and conspiracy, linking "climate change" and "global warming" to "fake news", "taxes", and "agenda", with users dismissing climate change as propaganda for new forms of taxation and control. A second nucleus opposes anthropogenic accounts to narratives of natural cycles, arguing that current warming is "nothing new" and that the game exaggerates human responsibility. A third cluster centres on distrust of expertise, mobilising controversies such as "Climategate" to erode the epistemic authority underpinning the game's design. In contrast, a smaller but visible nucleus defends the game as broadly aligned with mainstream scientific assessments and uses it to discuss mitigation and long-term consequences, yet these contributions are often dismissed as importing "real-world politics" into a leisure space.

These results illuminate how player communities participate in the social construction of climate imaginaries on "shifting grounds", where game-adjacent online platforms can both foster connections across epistemic divides and circulate alternative environmental knowledge. The study thus shows how the paths taken by game communities in mediating climate knowledge foreground both the opportunities and the challenges they pose for imagining shared environmental futures.

DGR05 Games and Society

PP 0549 Gender positioning in online game livestreams: An interaction analysis

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Video game livestreams are the interactional space where gamers not only play, but they also perform their gender position in front of other individuals. Despite the presence of women in the gaming sphere, toxic masculinity remains a central issue. Phenomena like Gamergate exposed the institutionalized misogyny of toxic gamer culture. With the livestream spread, the fake-girl-gamer discourse surrounding female streamers has shaped, questioning the legitimacy of women's presence and, along with geek masculinity, seriously challenging meritocracy claims and equality in gaming.

The women's presence in the gaming sphere remains controversial even in seemingly democratic Western societies, but in a society like Iran, where women's voices are silenced by mainstream society, political and religious structures, the situation becomes even more problematic. Along with the significant increase in video game enthusiasts in Iran and its social and cultural consequences, there is a noticeable lack of gender-centric research. We aim to analyze gender representation and power dynamics in Iranian gamers' livestreams.

Gender Position and Performativity

Livestream platforms such as Twitch and YouTube-Gaming have become dominant platforms for video games display and experience. This development has raised fundamental questions about how gender is perceived and represented in this environment. We draw on positioning theory (PT) and Butler's gender performativity to analyze the process of gender formation in livestreaming interactions. PT, emphasizing the discursive roots of interactions, shows how gamers construct their positions according to their gender versus other players and audiences through their speech, presence, and performance. As a vital complement, gender performativity views gender as a social act, fluid, and dependent on repetition and power relations. The overlap of these two approaches allows for an analysis of the reproduction of gender positions and the role of language, norms, and dominant power in video games' livestreams.

Research Goals

This research aims to demonstrate the process of Iranian gamers' performativity and position during gaming livestreams, with a particular focus on how gender positions are represented and constructed among male and female players. This research assumes that gamers actively enact and perform their gender through gaming and social interactions within the context of livestreaming discourse. We analyze the process by which gamers shape their position in interactions with other gamers. It is also assumed that gender plays a determining role in accessing dominant and leadership positions and that there are significant differences in the way gender is performed between male and female gamers during interactions.

Methodology and State of Research

To examine the gender positions and gamers' performativity layers; We use qualitative content analysis. Our focuses are on Iranian game streamers (Mean≈ 89K followers) regularly broadcasting their gameplay in the in-group games form, evenly split according to gender. We study twelve hours recorded livestreams. Gender positions are divided into dominant and subordinate categories based on the PT and gender performativity and are operationalized through interactional indicators. Storylines, speech-acts, and interaction patterns between gamers and viewers are analyzed as mechanisms for the formation of these positions. Material has been coded and is currently reviewed and interpreted.

FIS01 Circulation, the (Post-)Colonial and Modernity

PP 0448 Shifting screens: VHS repertoires and film circulation in late socialist Romania

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During the 1980s, film circulation and consumption in socialist Romania were reshaped by a convergence of institutional restrictions and emerging media technologies. While imports of foreign (particularly Western) films for cinema were heavily reduced, in January 1985 state television limited its daily broadcasting schedule to approximately two hours (Bardan 2010). Within this context, the expansion of VHS-based film screenings marked a significant shift in the organization, accessibility, and experience of film culture. Initially, video screenings were organized as public events in theaters, opera houses, and philharmonic halls, often as part of institutional strategies to compensate for the financial pressures generated by state-imposed self-financing measures (Parvulescu and Copilas 2013). From late 1985 onward, VHS exhibition migrated into private domestic spaces, where informal collective screenings proliferated (Kovács 2021). Scholarship on Eastern European socialism has frequently approached the rise of video in the region through the lenses of piracy, and technological disruption, positioning VHS primarily as a subversive alternative to state-regulated cinema. This paper proposes a historically grounded analysis that situates the video phenomenon within broader continuities and transformations of film circulation in socialist Romania. Rather than treating the VHS technology as an exceptional rupture, this study examines how video screening intersected with established practices of film programming, distribution, and reception across different institutional and informal settings.

Methodologically, the paper adopts a multi-level historical approach, combining archival research with comparative repertoire analysis. The empirical corpus consists of archival documents containing film repertoires from both state videotheques and private video collections active during the 1980s. The films are analyzed in relation to earlier state cinema programming, allowing for cross-temporal comparison of genres, national origins, and programming patterns. Particular attention is paid to the circulation of foreign films and to the ways in which film content moved across formats, venues, and regulatory frameworks. By analyzing films both as cultural products and commodities circulating within specific economic and institutional conditions, this study identifies the main features of VHS repertoires during late socialism and highlights both ruptures and continuities in Romanian cinema cultures.

The findings suggest that VHS screenings did not simply oppose or replace theatrical cinema, but reconfigured existing modes of access and viewing while remaining embedded in longer-term structures of socialist cinema cultures. In dialogue with the conference theme “Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures,” this proposal argues for historically informed and methodologically open approaches that can account for media transitions without reproducing narratives of technological exceptionalism.

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FIS01 Circulation, the (Post-)Colonial and Modernity

PP 0449 Participatory and collaborative filmmaking as anti-racist pedagogies in post-colonial Spain

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This presentation examines how collaborative filmmaking (CF) and participatory filmmaking (PF), a set of methods that involve groups in the co-creation of films, can be mobilised as pedagogical interventions and critical methodologies to build anti-racist solidarities through critical media analysis and counter-media production. Drawing on our experience as members of the research project “Institutional documentary and amateur cinema in the colonial era: analysis and uses” (PID2021-123567NB-I00), which has organised, studied, and digitised Filmoteca Española’s colonial film collection, we focus on a series of CF and PF workshops developed with Spanish and Equatoguinean institutions and partners. We introduce and analyse our work with the school Malabo Eyi Moan Ndong, the Madrid-based association 24 Posibilidades por segundo, and the Cameroon-born filmmaker based in Madrid, David Bingong. These activities brought together young students and artists from diverse geographical, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds to engage with historical and contemporary footage shot in former Spanish and European colonies.

We argue that these workshops and film collaborations operate as anti-racist pedagogies in three interconnected ways. First, they generate collaborative creative dynamics that resist extractive, top-down knowledge-making by centring the

political agency and lived experience of those most targeted by racist discourse. Second, they repurpose amateur colonial archives and personal recordings of Africa-to-Europe border crossing through shared acts of curation animated by anti-racist and decolonial imaginations, transforming archival engagement into a collective practice of critique and re-signification. Third, they open dialogic spaces within and beyond academia where researchers, co-researchers, filmmakers, NGOs, and grassroots cultural actors can name racism as a structural problem and negotiate how it is represented, discussed, and challenged.

We contend that when PF and CF are rooted in care, mutual accountability, and political commitment, they can function as anti-racist pedagogies capable of confronting epistemic violence and supporting solidarities grounded in relational, experience-led modes of knowledge production and circulation. At the same time, we attend to their limits and to the conditions under which these practices unfold, including dilemmas of authorship and representation; ethical complexities around cultural safety, consent, and visibility; and institutional pressures that can re-inscribe asymmetries in funding, credit, and circulation. Taken together, these cases offer a practice-based account of how PF and CF can retool film education and counter-media production as sites of collective learning, counter-archival work, and civic co-creation, and they conclude with practical recommendations for ethically grounded practice.

FIS01 Circulation, the (Post-)Colonial and Modernity

PP 0450 Fanhall and the circulation of Chinese independent cinema: An internet archaeological approach to informal infrastructure

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This paper examines Fanhall (Fanhall.com), one of the most influential online communities for Chinese independent cinema between 2001 and its closure in 2011. Drawing on an archaeological and sociological approach to digital media, the study treats Fanhall not merely as a website but as a historically situated informal infrastructure. It enabled Chinese independent films to gain visibility and dissemination outside the official and commercial systems, constructing a unique alternative archive of the collective memory of Chinese independent cinema.

After outlining the historical development of Fanhall, as well as its interface design and content structure, the paper moves to the analysis of three interconnected empirical objects. First, it analyzes Fanhall's "activity posts" (Huodong), which announced screenings, discussions, lectures, forums, festivals, recruitment, call for submissions, workshops, and training courses. Based on their themes and content, these activities can be categorized into several specific types. These activities and their publicly available information, to some extent, reflect the specific patterns and practices of the Chinese independent cinema circulation network at that time.

Second, this paper focuses on a set of key human and organizational actants—such as Zhu Rikun, Lu Zhixin, Lixianting's film school and some of the most active festivals, clubs, salons, etc.—whose repeated involvement helped establish a relatively stable network for the distribution and exhibition of Chinese independent films. These figures can be understood as mediators of visibility, whose organizational work shaped access, participation, and forms of self-granted legitimacy within the informal media economy.

Third, the study examines posts from the forum group "Xianxiang Improvement Group," (Xianxiang Gaijin Zu) where users could discuss things like technical maintenance, community governance, and, more importantly, the survival of the community itself, especially in the period leading up to Fanhall's closure in 2011. Through close reading of some highly emotional and even aggressive contents, the analysis reveals the fragility of Fanhall as a heterogeneous space of resistance. This fragility, in turn, reflects the broader instability and potential invisibility that have characterized the historical development of Chinese independent cinema.

Through its discussion of these cases, the paper suggests that the expectations regarding the future of Chinese independent cinema articulated through Fanhall can, to some extent, be understood as a form of networked activism grounded in the everyday practices of ordinary participants. However, in light of some recent developments and events, the paper argues for a critical re-examination of the technological optimism that once accompanied such expectations.

FIS02 Film Industries

PP 0559 Youth's labour in the creative industries: The case of the European film industry

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Cinema has a dual position within the battle for social justice: it is a medium that enables representational and challenges social inequalities and at the same time it is an industry whose structures often reproduce these injustices. This study examines social justice in the European film industry, focusing on the experiences of emerging professionals. Drawing on theoretical perspectives which distinguish between the film content and the conditions of film production, the study

explores social justice as a structural issue within the labour practices, which extends to access opportunities within the industry.

Grounded in definitions of social justice that emphasise fairness, equity, participation and well-being, the study analyses how justice is enacted or denied in filmmaking practices. For this purpose, the research is based on 26 semi-structured interviews with young film professionals aged 18 to 35 from across Europe, representing a wide range of roles including directing, producing, writing, acting, editing as well as technical positions. These interviews are complemented by document and policy analysis to position individual experiences within broader industry structures of the European film industry.

Findings reveal that young filmmakers face forms of social injustice related to age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education level and language. Participants describe barriers such as unpaid or underpaid labour, limited access to professional networks, exclusion from decision-making processes and age-related challenges at their creative work. Additionally, gender discrimination remains apparent, particularly in technical roles and leadership positions, while diversity measures are often perceived as biased. Migrant filmmakers and those from minority or lower socioeconomic backgrounds face also disadvantages, such as restricted access to institutional support and professional opportunities. Participants also highlight the marginalisation of disabled professionals and a generational distansing that limits the inclusion of younger voices in creative decision-making. Finally, the study argues that these experiences reflect established industry cultures that prioritise power hierarchies, while undermine inclusivity and equality.

FIS02 Film Industries

PP 0560 At the fringes of cinema voices in the European film competitiveness

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The European film industry continues to reproduce structural inequalities that marginalise migrants, diasporic communities, women, and young filmmakers, restricting their access to funding, institutional support, and opportunities for representation. These groups often face systemic disadvantages. Migrants are confined to stereotypical narratives and excluded from mainstream cultural institutions (Salgado & Patuzzi, 2022), diasporic filmmakers contribute significantly to diversity yet remain underacknowledged (Jäckel, 2010), women remain underrepresented across key creative and decision-making roles (Simone, 2023) and young filmmakers struggle with precarious production contexts and limited pathways to sustainability (Sarikakis, Ramadani, & Juengst, 2026).

The concept of “fringes” in film refers to independent, experimental, and niche productions that challenge conventional cinema through alternative storytelling and techniques. These spaces function as incubators for innovation and diversity, enabling new voices and cultural expressions that often remain marginalised in mainstream contexts (Missen, 2002).

This paper positions the fringes of filmmaking, independent, experimental, and niche spaces, not as peripheral but as central arenas for innovation, diversity, and emancipatory cultural practice. Far from being mere margins, these spaces incubate new voices, alternative narratives, and artistic experimentation, allowing marginalised creators to challenge hierarchies and expand the cultural and economic vitality of the European film industry.

Drawing on case studies from six EU member states (Austria, Belgium, France, Greece, Poland, and Spain), the document examines how marginalised groups participate in and shape these spaces, as well as how national policies, industry practices, and initiatives such as film festivals mediate their access.

Keywords

fringes, migrants, youth, women, EU policies, EU practices, film industry

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FIS02 Film Industries

PP 0561 Young people shaping the film industry

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Young people are both the present and the future of cultural creative industries, dynamically shaping creative sectors such as the film industry. Existing literature on the role of young people as young audiences and consumers, underlines the lack of studies capturing youth's voices and providing a comprehensive understanding of young people's perceptions on preferences, interests and challenges, regarding film consumption and engagement with a film-related interactions, which range from film clubs to filmmaking itself. To address this gap, the current study uses mixed-methods, combining survey data of 320 responses and focus group interviews of 60 young people aged 18 to 24 of the Austrian capital, Vienna.

The findings of the study point out that young people's preferences are associated with emotional attachment and films with which they can feel related and connected and evoke strong emotional responses, inspiration and personal projection. Young audiences value complex and alternative film narratives, nostalgic films related to their childhood and authenticity over artificial storytelling. Additionally, young people are not restrained to film consumption but rather adopt an interactive approach to film by generating conversations via sharing film-related cultural perceptions and experiences on social media platforms. Similarly, platforms like Letterboxd, provide space for active engagement in a collective meaning-making of the movie.

A further layer of interaction with films is young people's engagement with video- and even filmmaking. Film production is a multifaceted process combining from the one hand, skills development and professional exploration and expanding on the other hand, to creativity boundaries, identity discovery, self-expression and social engagement. Finally, young people are shifting learning paradigms towards the democratisation of video and filmmaking education through autodidactic models and everyday equipment, such as smartphones, generating an informal, alternative, self-motivated creative path. To foster the competitiveness of the European film industry is necessary to embrace the new filmmaking paradigm that young people employ and adopt a democratic approach in film creation and film distribution, by fostering and funding small projects of young creators.

FIS02 Film Industries

PP 0562 Balancing cultural distinctiveness and economic survival: Analyzing challenges of small-scale film exhibitors in Flanders and Brussels

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Theatrical exhibition remains a central component of the audiovisual ecosystem, functioning as a key indicator of a feature film's economic value and as a cultural infrastructure that shapes access to and engagement with cinema (Kehoe & Mateer, 2015; UNIC, 2025). While the theatrical performance influences circulation across release windows and territories (European Audiovisual Observatory, 2024; Gaustad, 2019), they also play a vital cultural role by curating viewing experiences, supporting diverse repertoires, and establishing and sustaining local film cultures. Small-scall exhibition contexts, in particular, embody these dual economic and cultural roles. Ultimately, creating a reality where exhibitors must continuously negotiate commercial viability and cultural missions.

This paper examines the small-scale exhibition circuit in Flanders and Brussels, a fragmented audiovisual market that exemplifies the challenges faced by independent profit cinemas, arthouses, and cultural exhibitors in Europe. In recent years, these exhibitors have been confronted with competition from global streaming services, effects of prolonged COVID-19 closures, rising energy and labour costs, and increasing infrastructural demands.

Despite their central role in connecting films and audiences, exhibitors remain underrepresented in research on audiovisual sustainability and policy. Existing research has largely focused on audience experiences (e.g. Tintel & Raats, 2022; Veenstra et al., 2021), while audiovisual policy frameworks have traditionally prioritized production over distribution and exhibition (Drake, 2018; Harris, 2018; Santos & Miranda, 2023). Consequently, little attention has been paid to how small-scale exhibitors negotiate economic and cultural tensions in practice and how their perspectives could inform more integrated policy approaches.

Addressing this gap, the paper asks: *What are the main infrastructural and programming needs of the small-scale exhibition circuit in Flanders, and how do these relate to the current exhibition landscape and policy frameworks?* To answer this question, we adopted a mixed-method case study of Flanders and Brussels, a small and fragmented audiovisual market that exemplifies the challenges faced by small-scale exhibitors in Europe. We conducted an online survey (n = 35) complemented with expert interviews (n = 16), allowing us to identify exhibitors' infrastructural and staffing needs, trace broader sectoral dynamics, and situate them within policy debates. While the survey allowed us to ask about the organizational

structures and more operational specifics, the in-depth interviews created possibilities to question exhibitors' strategies, infrastructural challenges, and policy expectations.

The results bring together the findings into a framework that identifies key leverage points that are necessary for a more coherent and sustainable strategy for small-scale film exhibition. By highlighting the interconnected economic, cultural, and infrastructural needs of small-scale exhibitors, the framework aims to support both industry actors and policymakers in establishing support measures that take into consideration the lived realities of cinema exhibition. In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on the future of theatrical exhibition and the development of a more holistic audiovisual and cultural policy framework.

FIS03 Alternative Cinemas

PP 0783 From testimony to evidence: Documentary portraiture in a post-testimonial digital culture

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This paper argues that the documentary portrait constitutes a distinct genre within documentary cinema. Nowadays, the methodological principles of the named genre have shifted in response to the epistemological expectations of contemporary digital culture. In particular, it suggests that interview-based self-narration is no longer widely perceived as sufficient evidence when portraying controversial historical figures. This argument is developed through a comparative analysis of two documentary portraits of Leni Riefenstahl: Ray Müller's *The Wonderful, Horrible Life of* Leni *Riefenstahl* (1993) and Andres Veiel's *Riefenstahl* (2024).

Within documentary film studies, the documentary portrait has often been subsumed under biographical or auteur-oriented documentary forms. Drawing on Bill Nichols' theory of documentary modes, this paper conceptualises the documentary portrait as a genre centred on the representation of an individual figure as a site of ideological negotiation, ethical responsibility, and historical accountability.

Müller's 1993 film exemplifies a late twentieth-century documentary paradigm in which extended interviews and first-person testimony function as primary sources of meaning. Although the film incorporates critical commentary and archival footage, its narrative structure remains heavily dependent on Riefenstahl's self-presentation. Her repeated claims of political innocence and artistic autonomy shape the film's interpretative framework, reflecting a documentary ethics grounded in dialogue, presence, and performative self-disclosure.

Within Nichols' framework, the film operates primarily within participatory and reflexive modes, yet ultimately grants the subject considerable narrative authority.

By contrast, Veiel's *Riefenstahl* (2024) represents a decisive methodological shift characteristic of contemporary documentary portraiture. Produced in a post-testimonial and digitally mediated media environment, the film largely removes the subject's spoken voice and constructs its argument through extensive archival material, including private correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, audio recordings, and visual documents. This archive-driven approach reflects a broader scepticism toward personal testimony as evidence, particularly in the representation of historically compromised figures.

The documentary portrait thus becomes investigative and evidentiary rather than confessional.

This transformation is closely linked to the epistemological demands of contemporary digital culture. Increased media literacy, awareness of self-mythologisation, and the prevalence of post-truth discourse have reshaped expectations of documentary credibility. In this context, interviews are increasingly perceived as performative rather than evidentiary, prompting filmmakers to adopt archival, forensic, and reconstructive strategies. The documentary portrait responds by repositioning itself as a mode of critical reconstruction rather than self-representation.

The comparison of the two films demonstrates how the documentary portrait is reshaped by a digital media culture in which testimony alone no longer functions as proof. As a result, the genre redefines its ethical and methodological foundations, prioritising the contextualisation, contradiction, and historical responsibility. The documentary portrait thus emerges as a critical cinematic form that reflects contemporary concerns with evidence, power, and mediated memory.

Keywords

documentary portrait; genre theory; archival documentary; post-testimonial culture; digital media; Leni Riefenstahl

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FIS03 Alternative Cinemas

PP 0784 What is the future for film critics?

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This paper considers the role of the traditional film critic in an age of online commentary, aggregators and influencers. Fears around the demise of the art of film criticism are not new. In 1990, for instance, Richard Corliss, the *Time* critic, wrote:

Movie criticism of the elevated sort, as practiced over the past half-century by James Agee and Manny Farber, Andrew Sarris and Pauline Kael, J. Hoberman and Dave Kehr—in the mainstream press and in magazines like *Film Comment*—is an endangered species. Once it flourished; soon it may perish, to be replaced by a consumer service that is no brains and all thumbs.

(https://www.filmcomment.com/article/richard-corliss-all-thumbs-or-is-there-a-future-for-film-criticism/)

More recently, in December 2025, A.S. Hamrah wrote in the *New York Review of Books*:

Most mainstream film criticism is of the average Rotten Tomatoes variety […] Critics [in the past] had personality, style, originality, wit, and deep knowledge borne of seeing many films, but for the most part publishers replaced them as they retired or died with people who could always be counted on to tell readers that *Good Time* was a bad movie and *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri* or *1917* were good ones. I think of these critics as fake humanists, devoid of any of the values or pleasure I expect when I read film criticism.

https://www.nybooks.com/online/2025/12/02/a-total-breakdown-of-all-the-easter-eggs/.

Is this just a couple of old dinosaurs raging against change or is the de-professionalisation (read democratisation) of film criticism a cause for concern? As an academic who also works as a film critic (on national radio), I think of myself as speaking to those listeners who are looking for informed but also entertaining reviews of upcoming releases. I also recognise that I am speaking to an older, middle-class cohort.

To provide a deeper analysis of the issue, I will be conducting semi-structured interviews with a range of local (Irish) film critics and publicists. Questions will include whether they are full time or freelance, and whether they can support themselves solely as film critics; how long they have been working as film critics; whether they have seen their outlets remain steady or reduce/expand in size; what they see their function as film critics to be; what they see as the future of film criticism. I will also be asking publicists what outlets they consider most effective for the promotion of films; and eliciting from them how they consider the business of film promotion has changed in the past twenty years.

FIS03 Alternative Cinemas

PP 0785 Leviathans in the desert: Dams, cinema and state power in Egypt, Syria and Sudan

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Large-scale dams in arid and semi-arid regions function as instruments of resource control and technologies of political authority and subject formation. By comparing films set in Nasserist Egypt, Ba'athist Syria, and Bashirist Sudan, this paper studies how Arab cinemas have represented three state-sponsored mega-dams—the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, the Tabqa Dam in Syria, and the Merowe Dam in Sudan—as Leviathan-like formations of state power: modern infrastructures through which the modern nation-state disciplines territory and population. Under the administrations of Gamal Abdel Nasser, Hafez al-Assad, and Omar al-Bashir, images of dams were often linked, both figuratively and discursively, to the promise of turning arid deserts into water-fattened gardens and "backward" peasants into "modern citizens."

The study centers on a series of films that trace the rise, erosion, and suspension of hydraulic sovereignty: *The Nile and the Life* (Youssef Chahine, 1968), Omar Amiralay's *Euphrates Dam* trilogy (1970–2003), and *The Dam* (Ali Cherri, 2022). Across these works, desertscapes appear as "technological hydroscapes" (Nüsser and Baghel 2017), landscapes transformed by the implementation of new systems of water and energy governance. In *The Nile and the Life*, the Aswan High Dam is represented as a revolutionary "accelerator of time" intended to affirm national autonomy. However, this modernization campaign is revealed to rely on colonial-era paradigms of domesticating the population through nature, which results in the formation of what Rob Nixon (2011) terms "non-imagined communities" and the forced displacement of the Nubian community. Amiralay's trilogy documents the collapse of Ba'athist agrarian reforms in the al-Jazira region. The three documentaries that constitute the trilogy—*Film-Essay on the Euphrates Dam* (1970), *Everyday Life in a Syrian Village* (1974) and *A Flood in Baath Country* (2003)—show how the centralization of water resources has led to socio-cultural stagnation and the emergence of a regime of absence, in which the state's rhetoric of progress is contested through the persistence of feudal tribal power and anthropogenic degradation. Finally, *The Dam*, set in the shadow of the 2019 Sudanese revolution, situates its narrative around the legacy hydro-agricultural mission initiated under al-Bashir's regime as it sought to distinguish itself from Hassan al-Turabi's earlier project of militarized Islamism. Here, the desert operates as an extra-institutional zone where political possibility can still be sensed, rehearsed, and materially shaped. As such, the horizon of the desert is

closely aligned with what Franco Berardi (2017) calls the "horizon of possibility." By reading dams as cinematic objects of state imagination, the paper argues that Arab cinema offers a privileged lens through which to trace shifting configurations of infrastructural power, from revolutionary futurism to authoritarian stagnation and suspended political possibility.

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FIS04 Narration and Representation in Film

PP 0891 Weather as narrative element in contemporary Nordic film

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This paper examines how contemporary Nordic fiction films may contribute to public climate understanding and nature experiences. It does so by narrating life in what Bronwyn (2024) terms the hydrocene, an era in which floods, droughts, storms, and melting ice increasingly shape experience. Fictional weather and water worlds—such as the catastrophic storm in *The Perfect Storm* (Petersen, 2000), the lethal rainfall in *The Rain* (Bose & Allen, 2018–2020), or the snowbound isolation in *Trapped* (Kjartansson, 2016–2021)—can be seen as elements in "green storytelling". They do more than dramatize crisis or drive the plot we argue. They function as weather stories that allow audiences to sense climate and nature issues not as abstract data but as embodied, affective, and dramaturgical experiences. As Angelone argues, persuasion emerges not from information alone but from storytelling (2022).

Drawing on both film dramaturgy (Truby, 2008; Aronson, 2010) and ecoliteracy (Orr, 1992; Capra, 1996), we analyse how five Nordic films use weather—both as disruptive element and ambient condition—to create cultural meaning. Ecoliteracy is understood here as a form of knowledge and awareness that foregrounds natural systems, interdependence, and the ethical imperative to understand the more-than-human world.

Based on close analysis of five Nordic films from the past decade, the paper investigates:

1. The narrative and affective functions of weather, including its role as inciting incident, actant, tonal driver, part of the arena, and mediator of character–environment relations.
2. Expressions of ecoliteracy, such as the decentring of human agency and portrayals of humans as embedded within or estranged from natural environments.

Our main research question is: Which functions do weather elements serve in the five selected Nordic films? The paper thus discusses how cinematic weather elements may operate as cultural "laboratories" in which audiences can rehearse responses to crisis, sense vulnerability, and imagine sustainable and equitable futures. We argue that films in which weather is a narrative element hold artistic and communicative potential, fostering affective engagement, ecological awareness, and new modes of nature sense-making.

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FIS04 Narration and Representation in Film

PP 0892 The isolated white frame in narrative film editing: A pragmatic and cognitive analysis

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The insertion of isolated white frames into a film technically constitutes a disruptive strategy within the photogrammatic chain, introducing an extraneous, content-void element that is potentially capable of disturbing the spectator's filmic experience. However, this practice has been recurrently employed by commercial film editors to enhance specific narrative events, thereby intensifying the spectator's response.

The systematic analysis undertaken around this device has consisted in identifying examples in order to obtain the most exhaustive census possible, organized according to the different uses of this technique throughout the history of cinema, as well as in implementing an experimental design in which 40 participants underwent EEG recording while viewing 30 film excerpts containing such frames, in order to assess their cognitive effects.

The generation of the broadest possible census was conducted by consulting the open database *Cinemetrics*. Through this one, films were selected where the duration of the shortest shot was equal to or less than 0.1 second. After that, an automatic analysis (on Python) was conducted based on the shot boundary detection (SBD) to locate isolated shots. The analysis was based on a sequential filter combination involving a color histogram analysis, a mean squared error analysis (MSE), a structural similarity index measure (SSIM), and a histogram correlation analysis. The cut analysis was automated to detect shots consisting of a single frame, after which a manual selection was performed according to the obtained results.

To evaluate the cognitive effects, EEG recording was conducted using a 31-electrode system, with mastoid referencing and a sampling rate of 500 Hz. The data obtained were analyzed using event-related potentials (ERPs). The experiment consisted of confronting participants with either the original film material that includes a white frame or the edited versions in which it has been removed. The analysis was performed on the frame immediately following the white frame, which served as the starting point of the analysis in the same frame in both versions.

The results showed that white frames are consistently associated with punctual events. Specifically, among the 740 cases identified, the following categories were distinguished: I) explosions or shots, II) lights, III) hits, IV) spatial/temporal jumps, V) chromatic changes, and VI) mental images.

The ERP analysis revealed that the white frame exhibits clearly differentiated waveforms compared to conditions in which it is absent during the first 200 ms. This response is consistent with low-level visual processing of the white frame. However, from approximately 250 ms onward, this pattern appears to be inhibited by the processes triggered by the subsequent frame, with an amplitude difference showing a similar waveform when comparing ERPs from conditions with the white frame to those in which it was removed. This suggests that, after producing an early independent effect, the stimulus represented by the white frame is cognitively absorbed by the following shot, becoming integrated into the response elicited by the succeeding shot.

FIS04 Narration and Representation in Film

PP 0893 Negotiating cultural modernity in contemporary Saudi cinema: Representation, identity, and subjectivity in Basma (2023)

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Saudi cinema's recent "shifting grounds" are not only institutional, marked by the re-emergence of theatrical exhibition and the establishment of new cultural governance (Alamri, 2021; Shesha & Yusuf, 2021), but also, crucially, within cinematic representation itself. These shifts are increasingly articulated through domestic narratives that foreground everyday experience as a site where cultural meanings are negotiated (Foley, 2022; Alardawi, Saqah, & Zakari, 2023). This paper examines *Basma* (2023), written and directed by Fatima Al-Banawi, as a case study of how contemporary Saudi cinema encodes cultural modernity through representational strategies that foreground identity, family authority, affective belonging, and subjective experience.

Grounded in cultural studies, the analysis combines film text analysis with insights drawn from a semi-structured interview conducted with the filmmaker. Stuart Hall's theory of representation and his encoding/decoding model provide the primary conceptual framework, positioning *Basma* as a negotiated cultural text in which meaning is not fixed but produced through representational strategies and potential audience readings (Hall, 2019, 2020). Rather than framing modernization as rupture or ideological opposition, the film constructs cultural change as a process that unfolds through dialogue, emotional expression, and everyday interaction.

The analysis demonstrates how *Basma* mobilizes cinematic form mise-en-scène, cinematography, editing rhythm, sound design, and narrative structure to render emotional register a key representational resource (Dyer, 2023; Wildfeuer, 2014). Domestic spaces, conversational exchanges, affective soundscapes, and visual aesthetics become sites where authority,

belonging, and self-expression are rearticulated. These formal choices frame subjectivity not as overt resistance but as a relational and situational capacity emerging within familial and social contexts.

Methodologically, the study combines film text analysis, as articulated by Bateman and Wildfeuer, emphasizing the multimodal organization of meaning across visuals, sound, and narrative, and foregrounding how cinematic texts actively construct social meanings through form as well as content, with thematic analysis of the interview material following Braun and Clarke's approach, enabling a dialogue between how meaning is constructed on screen and how it is articulated and negotiated by the filmmaker (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bateman & Wildfeuer, 2016).

Situated within debates on national cinema, the paper engages with scholarship by Higson (1989), Crofts (1993), and Vitali & Willemen (2019) to argue that Basma articulates national cinema as a dynamic and contested cultural formation. The film forges connections between personal experience and collective identity, navigates paths between local cultural specificity and transnational circulation, and gestures toward future imaginaries of Saudi cinema grounded in negotiated representation. In doing so, the paper contributes to film studies discussions on how cinema intervenes in moments of social transformation through the politics of representation.

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GSC01 Gendered technologies and AI

PP 0063 Rewriting the rules: Women-led initiatives and gender equity in the gaming ecosystem

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Women account for nearly half of the global gaming population (Bryter, 2024), yet videogame cultures and industries remain shaped by persistent gender inequalities. Within games and gaming communities, women are frequently marginalised, stereotyped, or sexualised, and harassment is widespread: 59% of women report experiencing abuse, while 26% report sexual harassment in online gaming environments (Bryter, 2024; Fox & Tang, 2017). Despite women's substantial participation as players, dominant discourses in gaming culture continue to privilege male perspectives, influencing both character representation and the norms governing interaction within gaming spaces.

These inequities, however, extend beyond player experiences. Gender inequality operates across interconnected social and institutional contexts, each reinforcing the other. To fully understand these dynamics, the gaming ecosystem must be examined not only through online play but also through the structures of game design, production, and distribution. Within the European videogame industry, women represent only 24.9% of the workforce and are significantly underrepresented in senior and executive positions (Video Games Europe & EGDF, 2025). While industry-led initiatives such as the UK's Raise the Game programme (Taylor, 2022) and Video Games Europe's Diversity Pledge (VGE, 2022) have brought increased visibility to issues of equity and inclusion, their reliance on voluntary participation and self-reporting limits their capacity to produce sustained structural change.

In response to these limitations, women-led initiatives have emerged across Europe as grassroots advocacy actors. Rather than waiting for institutional or policy-driven solutions, these organisations develop independent strategies centred on empowerment, community-building, and advocacy. This paper examines how women-led initiatives intervene in male-dominated discourses within the gaming ecosystem by producing alternative narratives of participation, authority, and belonging. Drawing on policy analysis, grey literature, and semi-structured interviews, the study focuses on organisations such as Women in Games and GAME:IN, which operate as both advocacy actors and cultural intermediaries within Europe's gaming landscape.

The paper addresses two central research questions: how do women-led organisations identify and contest the structural and cultural conditions that sustain gender inequality in gaming, and in what ways do they mobilise grassroots advocacy and policy engagement to expand inclusion and leadership opportunities for women? We argue that these initiatives reveal how struggles over representation extend beyond on-screen imagery to encompass the narratives and power relations embedded in cultural production itself. By generating counter-discourses of equity and empowerment, women-led initiatives expose the limitations of surface-level diversity efforts and highlight the necessity of structural, cultural, and symbolic transformation within the videogame industry.

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GSC01 Gendered technologies and AI

PP 0064 Platformization, gender, and comedic authority beyond late-night programming

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There seems to be a perceived tension between femininity and the performance of comedy. In numerous Western societies, women are considered to lack humour, a cultural assumption that directly affects their popularity and agency as comedians. Usually, reputed comedy content is broadcast during prime time and late-night timeslots. Hosts of late-night television shows, which are spaces of high reputation and visibility, are usually people who were successful in stand-up comedy, an environment in which women were not easily accepted and not as successful as their male colleagues.

Previous scholarship has shown how institutional gatekeeping, format conventions, and cultural expectations have historically limited women's access to hosting roles and sustained visibility within the comedy industry, including late-night television. However, the platformization of comedy, particularly through stand-up specials distributed by global streaming services, has begun to reshape the conditions under which comic voices circulate, gain recognition, and establish authority. Building on this shift, this research focuses on examining Netflix original stand-up specials available on the platform in early 2026 as part of the comedy ecology. These specials give comedians the opportunity to perform a full hour under their own name, giving them a level of authority and visibility that can be compared to the one of hosting a comedy show in broadcast and cable television.

This paper examines how platformization potentially reconfigures gendered power relations in audiovisual humor media, shifting attention from broadcast formats to stand-up comedy specials available on streaming platforms, and whether existing hierarchies are reproduced or challenged. Methodologically, this paper combines a classification of the profiles of comedians who headline original stand-up content on Netflix, observing their professional positioning and overall profiles, including gender identity as well as analytical dimensions such as ethnicity, age and nationality, with content analysis of selected stand-up specials (e.g.: Aziz Ansari's, Ali Wong's, Joe Rogan's, Mae Martin's, Amy Schumer's, Kevin Hart's, or Wanda Sykes').

Through this approach, we explore whether platform-based stand-up comedy reproduces existing gendered hierarchies of humour, reinforces them in new ways, or instead opens up new possibilities for women's comedic authority and recognition in contemporary media cultures. This study contributes to feminist media and communication scholarship by critically examining how visibility, humor styles and authority are negotiated along gendered lines in platformized comedy spaces.

GSC01 Gendered technologies and AI

PP 0065 From flesh to code: reimagining gender, body and affect in female visual artists' AI-generated visuals

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This paper will examine how AI-generated visuals reconfigure the relations between body, emotion, and gender representation, through the imaginaries that female visual artists create around gendered embodiment and affect. Scholars have demonstrated that emotions circulate through media texts, platforms, and practices, shaping subjectivities and social relations. What AI adds to this history is a shift in how embodiment appears: generative AI produces synthetic images that are not anchored in lived bodies. This detachment from material experience forces us to revisit earlier debates about affect and embodiment in order to understand how these imaginaries are transformed when corporeality is simulated rather than experienced. Affect theory has been particularly influential in highlighting the nondiscursive, precognitive, and sensory dimensions of media engagement (Paasonen, 2015). Our framework builds on affect theory and feminist media studies, which have consistently shown that gendered representations cannot be understood without considering their affective and embodied dimensions. The materialist turn and feminist posthumanism (Ringrose et al., 2018; Marston, 2024) have foregrounded the interconnections of body, technology, and affect. Affect theory complements this by focusing on how media works through feelings rather than only what it means (Kannabiran, 2013). This perspective is crucial for AI-generated imagery, which reproduces cultural scripts of gender while simultaneously destabilizing the visceral, embodied anchoring of those representations. By situating AI within feminist debates about affect and embodiment, we aim to conceptualize the imaginaries it creates as both continuities with and departures from earlier digital media forms. For this paper, we aim to conduct semi-structured interviews with nine international female artists (i.e. Alex Naghavi, Arvida Byström, Mara Barros, Yéil, X New Worlds, Carly Fridhandler, Olya Golovko, Jeannette Bergen & Yasmin Gross) to examine their experiences using AI-generated visuals in order to explore how they rethink embodiment, affect and gender. We will question how they play with the visceral and challenge assumptions about embodiment, notably by creating hyperreal images that appear more realistic than human ones (Miller et al., 2023), how they potentially engage with the uncanny sensations their AI-generated images may evoke, due to glitches, lifeless eyes, or because they defy our perceptual norms (Manovich & Arielli, 2024), and ask how in their experiences lifelike bodies coexist with a visibly synthetic structure. We will also discuss whether the boundaries between human and machine are becoming increasingly blurry in their work, pointing to identities formed through continuous interaction with technology (Haraway, 2013), as well as how they interrogate both affect and the construction of emotion—understood not as individual psychology but as socially, politically, and materially produced—when reproducing or subverting cultural scripts of gender, particularly capitalist ones. In doing so, we will offer insights in how female artists reimage gender, the body and affect in AI-generated visuals.

GSC01 Gendered technologies and AI

PP 0066 Face filters as technologies of gender: A multimethod approach to gender performances on TikTok

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Over the last decade, face filters have become a major affordance of contemporary visual social media platforms, increasingly shaping how users construct and negotiate their identities online. This paper investigates how augmented-reality (AR) face filters on TikTok operate as "technologies of gender" (de Lauretis, 1987), actively shaping users' visual self-representation and reinforcing normative gender performances.

Although early AR face filters were popularized for playful and ironic distortions of facial features, they have gradually evolved into tools of self-enhancement and self-surveillance (Elias & Gill, 2018). The mediated representation of the body through technology is, of course, never neutral. Specifically, face filters foreground the role of digital technologies in amplifying existing social norms and cultural stereotypes. TikTok is a particularly significant site for an investigation of AR face filters' implications for gendered representation due to the relationship between its multimodal affordances, creator economies, and user base. These characteristics position TikTok as a key platform for examining contemporary visual practices of digital self-representation, with face filters engaging users in co-creative practices that foster experimentation with their appearance.

Through a multimethod research design combining digital methods, visual analysis, interviews with creators and analysis of users' comments, this research critically examines four different 'sites' of AR filters' visuality (Rose, 2022), namely production, circulation, audiencing, and visual content in its own right.

Our findings reveal that face filters function as tools which- alongside makeup, posing, framing, and editing- contribute to producing a 'hyperfeminine' representation of gender. Users primarily use these filters for makeover purposes, constructing this practice as a form of empowerment promoted by and for young women, also fostering a relationship described by Winch (2013) as "surveillance sisterhood", in which self-monitoring and mutual observation are normalized and encouraged. This discursive construction aligns with what the platform has typically rewarded: a heteronormative, traditionally feminine identity (Kennedy, 2020).

Moreover, our research shows that this gendered performance is actively produced through production practices as well. Our interviews with three women working as face filter designers indicate that representational resources are mobilized with the aim to create standardized, conventionally attractive features. This underscores how normative beauty ideals are embedded in the technical infrastructure of filters and reinforced by platform dynamics.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that AR face filters function as socio-cultural technologies that produce and promote highly standardized modalities of gendered visual self-representation on TikTok.

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GSC01 Gendered technologies and AI

PP 0067 Visual gendered disinformation: A two-part systematic literature review

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The general surge in disinformation and its consequences for democracy have become well-known and widely discussed issues among scholars and the public. What has received less attention is how women and gender minorities in positions of power, such as activists, journalists and particularly women politicians, are increasingly becoming the targets of disinformation that employs sexualised and gendered narratives in ways that upend their careers or dissuade them from pursuing them in the first place. This threatens not only women's participation and representation in politics but also democratic ideals of pluralism and gender equality.

Gendered disinformation refers to the instrumentalisation of gender-based stereotypes in false and misleading narratives in an effort to defame and oust women from positions of public trust (Judson et al., 2020; Jankowicz et al., 2021). With ever-new technologies, disinformation has advanced from text-based to AI-manufactured images and videos. Visual disinformation – information that uses visuals (original or manipulated) to deliberately deceive (Weikmann & Lecheler,

2022) – carries the risk of being perceived as even more credible, a result of the evidentiary quality and persuasiveness of images (Hameleers, 2020). Facilitated by gen-AI tools that amplify the spread of disinformation and the impact it has, deepfakes and non-consensual intimate imagery of women politicians, as examples from the UK show (Newman, 2024), have emerged as a particular challenge to democracies.

Within a growing body of research focused on visual disinformation or gendered disinformation, a scholarly gap emerges at the conjunction of these phenomena, for the analysis of which a systematic literature review (SLR) was considered a useful approach. SLRs are a structured process for transparently and reproducibly summarising the state of research on a specific topic, and help identify research gaps and future research needs (Grant & Booth, 2009; Sutton et al., 2019; Page et al., 2021). Thus, following the PRISMA guidelines ("PRISMA", n.d.), an SLR of visual gendered disinformation (VGD) was conducted.

The analytical process began with testing multiple systematic curations of keywords and query structures. The conceptual lacuna around VGD, noted above, manifested in this stage in the form of two distinct bodies of literature, gendered disinformation and visual disinformation, with only minimal overlap. Following this confirmation that VGD has not been addressed sufficiently as a singular concept, this paper pursues this need for further conceptualisation. To do so, the analytical process was redesigned by conducting two separate SLRs and then analysing their overlap in pursuit of a combined definition and typology of VGD via thematic analysis. The paper offers a typology of VGD which reflects a comprehensive and exhaustive understanding of the phenomenon and its conceptual boundaries. It is conceptualised and theorised with a view of VGD as a form of gendered discursive violence, operating at differing sites, including Audiences/Targets, Creators/Perpetrators, and Systems.

The proposed findings serve as a theoretical basis for further research, such as analysis of VGD content, audience perception of VGD content and effects on the women and gender minorities targeted by VGD.

GSC02 LGBTQIA+ and Media I: Experiences, Practices and Place-Making

PP 0172 Digital Place-Making and Queer Belonging: Examining the discursive construction of safe spaces on Philippine Subreddits

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Safe spaces are crucial for the LGBTQ+ community, providing essential havens of belonging and acceptance. In the Philippines, where discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity remains a contentious legislative issue, individuals increasingly rely on digital platforms to discover, create, and "place-make" these havens. Our study explores how queer safe spaces in the Philippines are discursively constructed, aiming to understand the affective and behavioral associations that define them.

While traditionally a physical process involving symbols and norms, place-making has extended into the digital realm through hashtags, geotags, and threaded discussions. This study focuses on Reddit, a platform where users crowdsource opinions and share personal experiences with a level of anonymity that fosters both supportive and toxic interactions. Using the R package 'redditextractoR,' we collected a corpus of 7,741 comments from Philippine-centric and LGBT-specific subreddits, including r/phlgbt and r/Philippines collected from 2024 to 2025. Through computational analysis, we examined semantic associations with the phrase "safe space." Using topic modeling, we find that discourses predominantly centered on themes of harassment and discrimination. The Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313) emerged as the most relevant topic, followed by intense discussions regarding physical locations like bathrooms and fitting rooms, often sparked by real-world incidents, such as a trans woman being denied access to a female fitting room in a Manila mall.

Word embedding results reveal semantic clusters that characterize the discursive construction of the phrase "safe spaces". Redditors frame this construct as inclusive, private environments where individuals can freely express their identities and celebrate differences. Furthermore, safe spaces are conceptualized as a necessary response to pervasive experiences of discrimination, trauma, violence, and assault.

The discourse also highlights significant power imbalances, as certain users dismiss transgender struggles or categorize the creation of gender-neutral facilities as a "waste" of resources. These word embeddings illustrate that safe spaces are dynamic and constantly in flux, where negative or discriminatory encounters can rapidly diminish a sense of security. Finally, these constructs extend beyond the physical to include digital platforms, which serve as non-physical safe havens where queer individuals can express themselves and share their experiences without judgment.

The findings demonstrate that queer safe spaces in the Philippines are not merely physical backdrops but cultural and social constructs shaped by digital communication. These spaces are defined by the provision of privacy and freedom from harassment. Ultimately, this research reinforces the need for a comprehensive SOGIESC Law in the Philippines to provide legal protection beyond the current scope of the Safe Spaces Act. Our findings also inform the construction of safety and security by revealing the affective and embodied experiences of queer people in their articulations surrounding safe spaces in social media. These narratives illustrate that security is not merely a matter of physical protection or legislative compliance, but a felt sense of belonging and bodily autonomy that is constantly negotiated within both digital and physical landscapes.

GSC02 LGBTQIA+ and Media I: Experiences, Practices and Place-Making

PP 0173 Exclusionary solidarity: Transmasculinity, affective contracts, and the dilemma of post-#MeToo Chinese digital feminism — A Weibo discourse analysis of the Cocona controversy

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On December 6, 2025, Cocona—a member of the Japanese girl group XG—publicly announced having undergone top surgery and identifying as transmasculine non-binary. This corporeal practice, disrupting the gender binary of the J-pop/K-pop idol industry, ignited intense discursive contention within Chinese digital fan communities. Distinguished from typical 'idol disqualification', this controversy centered on a clash between global queer narratives and a specific strand of local digital feminism known as 'all-female' advocacy. Critics accused the idol of 'exploiting girl group dividends', 'backstabbing women', and 'encroaching on female survival space'. Conceptualizing these reactions as a 'betrayal narrative', and drawing on theories of the 'affective contract' and 'moral economy,' this study investigates how fans interpreted this gender transition not as an act of personal liberation, but as a moral violation. It explores how the fan community, confronting the rupture of their projected ideals of 'female power', employed these narratives to reconstruct group boundaries and expel the transmasculine subject.

This study employs a computer-assisted qualitative design combining corpus mapping with Critical Discourse Analysis. A dataset of 7,471 Weibo posts was harvested via Python and keyword retrieval (6–13 December 2025), then cleaned and de-duplicated. Mapping reveals a compressed 48-hour attention burst, yet highlights a long-tail distribution where low-visibility posts sedimented moralised frames of 'betrayal' and 'resource competition'. These patterns guided the purposive selection of cases for a Faircloughian analysis examining: (1) textual strategies, (2) discursive practices, and (3) social practices associated with post-#MeToo digital gender politics in China.

The analysis reveals that the exclusion of transmasculinity is constructed through the interplay of economic metaphors, essentialist recontextualization, and affective mobilization. Specifically, fans reframe gender transition as a breach of commercial contract, interpreting the non-binary body as a 'theft' of resources meant for cisgender women. This economic logic is reinforced by the repurposing of feminist concepts like 'Girl Power' into tools of biological essentialism. Consequently, the study characterizes this backlash as a form of 'exclusionary solidarity' where transmasculinity is conflated with the 'patriarchal ghost' to secure a fragile utopian boundary. However, this study also notes that such exclusion is not totalizing but operates within a highly contested field. It reveals a profound fissure within digital feminism: a struggle between a defensive retreat into biological essentialism for safety and an emerging exploration of more fluid gender contracts. This study illuminates the 'translation mechanism' through which ontological gender debates are recontextualized into mobilized moral-economic discourse. It further demonstrates how platform vernaculars automate the enforcement of exclusionary norms. Ultimately, by unpacking these dynamics, the study exposes the structural dilemma of post-#MeToo digital feminism: the tension between constructing a safe 'utopian' boundary and the systemic erasure of gender diversity.

GSC02 LGBTQIA+ and Media I: Experiences, Practices and Place-Making

PP 0174 The algorithmized bisexual self: Digital representation and fragmented identification among Italian men

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This study explores the intersection of digital media consumption, bisexual identity, and social identity among Italian bisexual men. Within the broader field of gender, sexuality, and communication studies, it addresses the research question: **What does engagement with bisexual-themed content on social media generate among Italian bisexual men concerning their sexual identity?**

Drawing on the theoretical framework of identity and social identity (Ramos 2023; Gowland & Thompson, 2013, Thompson 2001, Mead 1934) and *mutual shaping* (Allouch et al., 2020 Wajcman, 2007; Barkardjieva, 2005; van Zoonen, 2002), this research aims to examine if algorithms and digital representation shape a more nuanced identity belonging or solitude within bisexual men in Italy. Employing a qualitative methodology, this work in progress presents preliminary findings from thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with seven Italian bisexual men (with data collection ongoing towards a target of 20 participants by the end of spring). Rather than discrete states of belonging or solitude, findings reveal complex, nuanced and fragmented patterns of identification mediated by algorithmic logics and varied forms of digital representation.

Results reveal a hierarchical architecture of identification in which visibility functions as a foundational yet non-deterministic condition for identificatory belonging. The mere existence of digital representation, even when stereotyped, holds significance for participants, indicating that visibility constitutes a necessary precondition for identification. However, meaningful belonging emerges primarily through content shared by Italian bi+ associations, and critically, only among those already aware of these organizations. Participants unfamiliar with such associations experience neither belonging

nor solitude, even when encountering LGBTIQ+ content more broadly. Identification through stereotyped representations (memes, humorous reels) occurs rarely and superficially.

Most notably, identification manifests predominantly through sexually objectified male content, a pattern that exemplifies Bhandari and Bimo's (2022) concept of the *algorithmized self*. This theoretical lens illuminates how platform logics, particularly algorithms that prioritize engagement through visual stimulation, actively shape sexualized self-perception by rendering certain representations of male bisexuality more visible, and acceptable, through *embodied masculinity* (Connel 2005). Consequently, participants' identification processes appear to be not merely facilitated but structurally constrained by algorithmic affordances that foreground sexualized content as the primary vector for bisexual recognition.

Diverging from prevalent patterns, one participant reported identification when bisexuality appeared within civil and human rights discourse, revealing an alternative identificatory logic wherein politicized representation offers more resonant pathways to self-recognition than algorithm-privileged sexualized content.

Interestingly, many participants perceive offline spaces as facilitating easier identity identification, attributing this to more authentic *impression management* (Goffman, 1959). However, this perception may itself be shaped by social constraints existing in digital environments, which foster self-conceptions influenced by distortions and group expectations (Bissaca et al., 2020).

GSC02 LGBTQIA+ and Media I: Experiences, Practices and Place-Making

PP 0175 Mapping Czech queer media: Homonormativity, satire, and queering of the mainstream

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This paper aims to analyse the contemporary queer media landscape in Czechia within the broader socio-cultural conditions of post-socialism, focusing on three queer online media outlets: Lui, Qult, and Buzerant. While Anglophone and Western queer media benefited from decades-long institutionalisation, queer media in post-communist countries remain fragmented or almost non-existent. However, such media play a crucial role in validating queer identities, fostering community, and promoting acceptance, especially in the face of limited mainstream representations. '

Even though Czechia (formerly Czechoslovakia) has a surprisingly long history of queer media, dating back to 1931, it was only in the 1990s that a proliferation of queer media initiatives emerged; however, most of these initiatives failed to undergo digital transformation. Shows and sections of mainstream media have absorbed their role, while queer media nowadays often take the form of individual profiles on social media. Today, Lui remains the only long-running queer magazine still published in print, while Qult represents one of the newest projects, and Buzerant (Czech for "faggot") operates as a satirical blog.

Despite more positive LGBTQ+ representations in contemporary fictional and non-fictional media content and growing social acceptance, existing research indicates that mainstream media continue to rely on reductive narratives; they rely on stereotypes or controversy. There is also a lack of respectful and inclusive language, especially regarding trans people. Moreover, the mainstreaming of queer themes may obscure diversity and flatten queer representation. This renders queer media important as they provide nuanced and intersectional media content, particularly in the light of rising hate crimes towards LGBTQ+ people, even in relatively liberal societies, including Czechia.

Methodologically, this study employs a qualitative thematic analysis of 40 articles published between 2023 and 2026, a period marked by intense political and public debate on queer issues. This includes the introduction of same-sex partnerships, the decision to abolish mandatory sterilisation for legal gender recognition for trans people, and the election of a populist government with partially anti-LGBTQ+ positions. This part is complemented by a critical discourse analysis of nine selected texts.

Preliminary results suggest that the three outlets adopt distinct strategies of representing queer themes. Lui tends toward a more homonormative and commercialised approach largely–but not exclusively–addressing gay male audiences. In contrast, Qult embraces a broader understanding of queerness and employs a subversive approach towards mainstream media conventions while centring queer perspectives. Buzerant, as a blog, uses parody and satire to queer both explicitly queer and non-queer topics.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader debate on minority media and queer representation by highlighting the strategies employed in queer media production in post-socialist Czechia. Together, these strategies reveal how queerness can be differently articulated across queer and non-queer topics, showcasing how Western models of queer sensitivity are translated and reconfigured within the post-socialist media landscape.

GSC03 Intersectional Activisms in Digital Spaces

PP 0280 Laughing through labor: Humorous representations of motherhood and care work on Instagram

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The study of motherhood representations in digital media has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years (Beuckels & De Wolf, 2024; Mary et al., 2024). Parallel debates, from the *Wages for Housework* movement (Callaci, 2025) to the visibility of unpaid care work during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chatzidakis et al., 2020), have long emphasized the need for a nuanced understanding of care as reproductive and affective labor. In media and communication research, this is analytically complex: private care work is embedded in hegemonic power structures, shaped by intersectional inequalities, and culturally gendered (Hatton, 2017). In neoliberal contexts, these inequalities are further individualized and depoliticized (Fraser, 2016), making operationalization of care inherently multilayered. While much research focuses on the commodification of motherhood and the reproduction of neoliberal motherhood ideologies on social media, discussions of care work remain sporadic (e.g., Hunter, 2016; Knauf & Schramme, 2023). Some studies, however, highlight the emancipatory potential of digital motherhood representations and their negotiation (e.g., Lopez, 2009; Van Cleaf, 2020). Humor emerges in this context as an aesthetic practice that challenges traditional motherhood images and enables new forms of visibility (Lehto, 2020; Lemish & Elias, 2020; Rowley, 2025; Stone, 2016). This paper investigates humorous visualization practices by German motherhood creators on Instagram, examining whether and how such posts intervene in visibility regimes of private care work. Central questions include: Which aesthetic forms of humor are employed? How do platform affordances enable the (in)visibility of care work? To what extent are dominant motherhood ideologies disrupted? A qualitative case study was conducted in spring 2025. From an initial dataset of 534 German-language Instagram accounts posting motherhood-related content with at least 10,000 followers, 20 accounts were selected based on account descriptions and humorous hashtags. The last five humorous posts from each account (n = 100; 98 Reels, 2 images) were analyzed using a Polytextual Thematic Analysis (Gleeson, 2020), integrating audiovisual and textual elements. Results highlight the intertextual structure of posts, combining visuals, popular sounds, memetic references, text overlays, and performative gestures. Four main humor forms were identified: (1) sketches and role-plays exaggerating everyday dynamics; (2) visual-narrative storytelling linking personal experiences with emotional-dramatic tension; (3) memetic formats using culturally recognizable symbols and remix techniques; and (4) child-centered humor. Three dimensions of private care were particularly salient in my analysis: (a) everyday care experiences and affective, repetitive labor; (b) satirical interventions in cis-heteronormative couple dynamics; and (c) humor addressing failures to meet motherhood ideals, enabling community identification and coping. Overall, the analysis shows that humor functions as an aesthetic practice shifting between affective community-building around care experiences and structural de-thematization of care conditions. Crucially, by engaging with everyday objects, routines, and visual symbols, these humorous practices constitute a form of *everyday aesthetics* that operationalizes care which make private care work communicable and culturally legible. While structural critique remains often muted in the "just a joke" mode, the study demonstrates that Instagram humor offers a pathway for mediating care, negotiating hegemonic motherhood norms, and creating affective spaces for shared understanding of care work.

GSC03 Intersectional Activisms in Digital Spaces

PP 0281 Navigating the digital "third space": Gender identity, ethnic representation, and resistance among unmarried Arab women in Israel on Instagram

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In the contemporary digital landscape, social media platforms have evolved beyond tools for communication into complex arenas for identity construction and negotiation. This study investigates the intersectional experiences of unmarried Arab women in Israel, exploring how they utilize Instagram to navigate the dual pressures of a traditional, patriarchal society and the demands of a modern, globalized digital culture. Situated at the crossroads of gender, ethnicity, and marital status, these women occupy a unique socio-political location where their online self-presentation becomes a significant act of agency and resistance.

Drawing on Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach to self-presentation, alongside functionalist and empowerment theories, this research posits that Instagram functions as a "third space"—a digital territory where disparate cultural scripts can be synthesized. The study employs a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in 2024 with 30 unmarried Arab women aged 18–38 from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds across Israel.

The findings reveal that participants actively curate their profiles to manage three primary dialectics. First, under the theme of **Navigating Dual Identities**, the study demonstrates how women perform a sophisticated balancing act. They construct a hybrid persona that respects traditional cultural norms while simultaneously signaling modernity and independence. This involves a conscious "code-switching" of visual and textual content to satisfy different imagined audiences, from conservative family members to liberal peers and global followers.

Second, the theme of **Empowerment and Resistance** highlights how Instagram serves as a site for counter-discourse. Participants use the platform to dismantle double stereotypes: those regarding the "submissive" Arab woman prevalent in Western/Israeli discourse, and those regarding the "spinster" prevalent in their own communities. By showcasing professional achievements, educational pursuits, and cosmopolitan lifestyles, these women reclaim the narrative of their femininity and ethnicity. The platform facilitates a form of "intra-personal empowerment," where the accumulation of social and symbolic capital (likes, comments) translates into increased self-efficacy and psychological well-being.

Finally, the theme of **Negotiating Modernity and Tradition** reveals that participants do not view these concepts as binary opposites but as fluid resources. Rather than rejecting tradition, they reinterpret it—displaying pride in ethnic heritage (cuisine, fashion) while reframing it within a modern aesthetic.

This study concludes that unmarried Arab women in Israel are not passive consumers of digital media but active agents who leverage Instagram to harmonize their fragmented identities. By creating a space where they can be both "Arab" and "modern," "modest" and "liberated," they challenge the hegemonic boundaries of their offline reality. These findings contribute to the broader discourse on gender and media by illustrating how marginalized groups utilize digital architecture to negotiate social risks and construct coherent, empowered identities in the face of intersectional oppression.

GSC03 Intersectional Activisms in Digital Spaces

PP 0282 YouTube podcasts as counter-archival trans life-writing: Transgender activism in Pakistan

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On Pakistan's social media counterpublics, YouTube has become a key platform where *khwajasiras* (transgender or trans-feminine "third gender" in South Asia) activists talk back to escalating moral panics around gender, sexuality, Western queer discourses and national belonging. *Khwajasira* is a term used for individuals who identity as transgender, non-binary, gender non-conforming and is widely understood as an indigenous (often spiritual) category with ancestral roots in pre-colonial South Asian history. This paper conceptualizes YouTube podcasts featuring *khwajasira* activists as a form of platformed trans 'life-writing' that doubles as a living counter-archive. In literary studies, life writing connotes culturally and historically situated acts in which narrators recount their lives in order to claim identities, make sense of experiences and address others (Smith & Watson, 2016). Through extended autobiographical narration, communal testimony and platform-specific genres such as conversational podcasts, rant monologues and reaction videos, activists appropriate and abrogate dominant religious, legal and trans-rights discourses as they narrate personal and collective histories. Drawing on the analytic framework of postcolonial appropriation and abrogation (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, 2002) combined with content and multimodal critical discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Machin & Mayr 2012), we examine more than 30 podcast episodes featuring five diverse transgender activists. Appropriation refers to the reworking/adaption of dominant languages and discourses for locally meaningful purposes; whereas abrogation rejects and displaces normative authority and hegemonic discourses. Our findings show how transgender activists: (1) 'appropriate' and 'abrogate' global trans-rights vocabularies and state categories into locally intelligible terms (2) re-narrate life trajectories and *khwajasira* realities across different layers of podcast discourse (autobiographical, communal-historical, legal-bureaucratic, religious-moral and pop cultural); and (3) negotiate YouTube podcasts as a genre blending form of life-writing to produce a counter-archive of *khwajasira* experiences and political work. In doing so, the article extends postcolonial theories of appropriation and abrogation from literary texts to non-literary, platformed media and contributes to scholarship on social media and queer/trans publics in the Global South by showing how transgender activists mobilize YouTube podcasts to assemble a fragile yet persistent trans public and counter-archive under conditions of heightened political and moral scrutiny. Lastly, it speaks to debates on social media by underscoring how transgender activists navigate social media's ambivalent affordances as both an amplifier of trans visibility and as a site of harassment and transphobia.

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GSC03 Intersectional Activisms in Digital Spaces

PP 0283 Affective temporalities and digital feminist activism: communicative practices of the 8M movement in Portugal and Brazil

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This paper is part of a broader research project that examines how time is experienced, narrated and politicised within contemporary feminist communication practices. Drawing on the concept of *affective temporality* (Chamberlain, 2019), the study explores how affects such as pain, anger, hope and solidarity are articulated with specific temporal regimes—often mobilised through the metaphor of feminist "waves"—to produce narratives that connect past experiences, present urgencies and future projections.

The analysis focuses on digital communication practices developed by feminist collectives involved in the 8M (International Women's Strike) movement in Portugal and Brazil. Adopting a qualitative and intersectional approach, the research is based on in-depth interviews with activists, participant observation, and the analysis of digital content produced on social media platforms between 2019 and 2024.

The paper argues that the 8M movement mobilises a distinct politics of time that challenges neoliberal logics of acceleration, productivity and forgetting. Through the activation of colonial memories, collective affects and dissident temporalities (e.g.time of care, listening and revolt) feminist digital activism constructs alternative ways of inhabiting time. In this sense, the movement does not merely communicate political demands but actively proposes new temporal imaginaries and modes of collective existence.

Digital narratives and mobilisation rituals within the 8M produce a specific temporal experience in which the past is continuously reactivated through historical memory, the present is lived as collective urgency, and the future is imagined as a space of radical transformation. These affective-temporal dynamics directly shape how female, racialised and dissident bodies occupy both public and digital spaces.

By engaging with the Gender, Sexuality and Communication Section, this paper contributes to debates on time as a structuring, yet often invisible, dimension of feminist struggles and gendered communication. Conceptualising time as an affective and political construction allows for the denaturalisation of normative forms of social and communicational organisation, highlighting alternative practices of meaning-making, memory and resistance in digital feminist activism.

Keywords

Cyberfeminism; Affective temporalities; 8M movement; Gender and communication; Intersectionality

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GSC03 Intersectional Activisms in Digital Spaces

PP 0284 Digital Feminism and Transnational Repertoires of Contention: the Case of the #EleNão Movement in Portugal

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#EleNão movement emerged in 2018 as an initiative led by Brazilian women on Facebook (Barajas, 2020; Carvalho et al., 2023) and rapidly expanded into street mobilizations through the organization of multiple protests in Brazil and in other countries around the world. These demonstrations were promoted by women from the Brazilian diaspora as well as by local organizations. This study analyses the repertoires of contestation of the #EleNão movement in Portugal as a digital glocal expression of feminist resistance to the rise of authoritarianism and misogynistic, anti-gender political rhetoric, focusing on the movement's hybrid performance between digital and street action.

The methodology adopted combines social movement theory with an analysis of the movement's repertoires of action, based on 70 journalistic pieces published in two newsmagazines, one weekly newspaper, and five leading daily newspapers in Portugal. Based on the concept of collective action repertoires (Tilly, 1978, 2008; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2004), the study shows how #EleNão mobilised transmediatic strategies: hashtags, performances, political aesthetics, in a logic of affective and visual protest, expanding the classic forms of mobilisation to include emotional, symbolic and decentralised dynamics. In the Portuguese case, the movement materialises in demonstrations organised by feminist collectives from the Brazilian diaspora, in conjunction with local associations, constituting a space for transnational solidarity and the re-configuration of protest practices in the digital era (Pavan & Mainardi, 2018). The analysis reveals a movement marked by the politicisation of testimony, the aestheticisation of protest and the constitution of an intersectional collective identity. This research lies in analysing #EleNão as a transnational digital feminist repertoire whose circulation does not primarily depend on formal organisational structures, but rather on platform-based communicational infrastructures. Instead of approaching transnationalisation as a linear process of diffusion, the research conceptualises it as a process of discursive and performative recontextualisation enabled by the connective logic of digital networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). Within this framework, the projection of #EleNão in Portugal is analysed not as a mere geographical extension of the Brazilian protest, but as a symbolic displacement that articulates local experiences with global feminist frames. By foregrounding the innovative dimension of digital feminist repertoires, the study argues that #EleNão in Portugal exemplifies a model of transnational contention grounded in connectivity, the circulation of affects, and the co-presence of digital and public space. It concludes that understanding contemporary feminism requires a rethinking of classical analytical categories in light of digital dynamics, thereby contributing to theoretical advances in social movement studies, gender studies, and communication research.

GSC04 Forms Of Backlash, The Manosphere and Anti-Gender Discourses

PP 0397 Exploring feminicide through pop culture on TikTok: Gendered communication in two Italian cases

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Exploring feminicide through pop culture on TikTok: gendered communication in two Italian cases

This paper examines how gender operates as a communicative structure within social media responses to feminicide, with the aim of analysing how gender issues- and feminicide in particular- are reworked within contemporary public discourse and popular culture. Focusing on TikTok, the study conceptualises social platforms as key sites where gendered meanings, power relations, and affective norms are produced, negotiated, and contested through everyday communicative practices.

The analysis focuses on platformed discourses surrounding the feminicides of Giulia Cecchettin and Giulia Tramontano, two highly visible cases in the Italian context. Rather than treating these events solely as social tragedies, the paper approaches them as moments of intensified gender communication, in which public narratives about violence, responsibility, emotions, and gender norms are actively constructed within platformed popular culture.

The study draws on a qualitative digital ethnography focusing on TikTok materials published between November 2023 and June 2024 and adopts a dual-criteria purposive sampling strategy. The corpus consists of 30 TikTok videos related to the two cases, selected through two complementary subsamples. The first includes 15 high-visibility videos, identified on the basis of observable engagement metrics (minimum thresholds of 100,000 views and 300 comments) and their ranking among the most visible results for relevant hashtags (#giuliacecchettin, #giuliatramontano, #femminicidio) within 30 days of each event. The second comprises 15 pop-expressive videos, selected to capture diverse platform-native expressive forms- such as confessional storytelling, meme-based irony, audio trends, duet/stitch responses, and aesthetic or AI-assisted videos- each meeting minimum circulation thresholds.

For each video, the top and most recent comments were collected. The material was analysed through critical discourse analysis and thematic coding, focusing on gendered accountability, emotional legitimacy, and symbolic violence as they emerge in comment interactions.

Preliminary analysis points to TikTok as a highly gendered communicative arena in which different types of content coexist and compete, including informational narratives, expressions of support and solidarity, as well as posts and interactions that reproduce forms of symbolic violence such as ironic backlash and victim-blaming. Platform affordances and algorithmic visibility shape the circulation and relative prominence of these communicative forms, influencing which voices are amplified and how legitimacy and exposure are unevenly distributed along gendered lines.

By situating feminicide-related communication within platformed popular culture, the paper argues that social media function as informal yet powerful sites of gender education. Through affective exchanges, aesthetic practices, and everyday interactions, TikTok contributes to the ways young users learn, negotiate, and contest meanings of gender, violence, and responsibility in contemporary digital environments.

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GSC04 Forms Of Backlash, The Manosphere and Anti-Gender Discourses

PP 0398 "Families are attacked every day": The Portuguese case of far-right wing and anti-feminist conservative discourses on TikTok

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Political communication strategies on social media are filled with alarming right-wing extremist rhetoric that incites hatred against women (Caldeira & Machado, 2023). Around the globe, we witnessed cases that denounce this issue as a problem for democracy (Krook, 2017), and we are urged to consider emerging responses from different spheres of society. In Portugal, this phenomenon is reflected in the Chega party, which was established as the third national political force and won 9.9% of the vote in the 2024 European elections (European Parliament, 2024). Not surprisingly, André Ventura, leader of the far-right Portuguese party, has used digital platforms to expand his presence among younger voters in recent years (Vieira & Joaquim, 2023).

In academic research purposes, gender is not seen as a central issue in political communication, although the far-right carries the mark of gender in its discourse. We bring gender issues to the centre of discussion to avoid what scholars in the news media field of research frequently neglect. We assume that political issues are not separate from gender in a discursive strategy which tends to contribute to the erosion of democratic public space through the promotion of symbolic violence and misogyny.

In this communication, we examine how the country's main far-right figure frames women and feminism on his TikTok profile. We examine his posts from a political and feminist perspective, taking into account how ideologies are spread through public-sphere discourses. The research is designed using a qualitative approach following a critical feminist discourse perspective (Lazar, 2018) on data analysis. The corpus consists of 164 posts from Ventura's TikTok profile. The data set includes 24 videos that mention and/or show actions by women and about women between March 1 and August 31, 2024. The six-month data collection period considers the three months before and the three months following the European Parliament elections. Three critical themes emerged: Femonationalism and strategic instrumentalisation, Gender as a floating signifier in political conflict, and Political gender violence and performances of masculinity.

Therefore, we discuss how far-right populism instrumentalises gender and feminist topics to promote ideas of exclusion. Extremist discourses feed on violence against women politicians to silence these dissenting feminist voices while building, behind digital performances of masculinity, a national identity that excludes this 'other'. Gender is a fluid mechanism, a resource that is always available to be shaped according to the political conflict of the moment. We argue that gender is not a marginal aspect of the far-right wing discursive strategies, but a central mechanism to normalise extremist ideologies. Women's rights issues are either exploited for xenophobic purposes or revived for use in a conservative context where family and traditions are valued, and women have a fixed place within this revived past.

Keywords

democracy, hate speech, far-right wing, anti-feminist discourse

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GSC04 Forms Of Backlash, The Manosphere and Anti-Gender Discourses

PP 0399 Tradwife discourses and digital labor within the alt-right imaginary on Instagram: The case of RoRo Bueno

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This article aims to analyze the tradwife trend through the case study of Spanish content creator Rocío (also known as RoRo) Bueno (@whoisroro), who has 4.8 million followers on Instagram, focusing on the reels published on her Instagram profile during 2025. The study examines how traditional gender roles are aesthetically and discursively rearticulated in contemporary influencer culture and how these representations resonate within broader ideological frameworks circulating in digital environments.

Emerging in the United States and the United Kingdom and gaining visibility between 2020 and 2024, the tradwife movement is led by women who promote a lifestyle centered on domesticity, heterosexual marriage, and gendered divisions of

labor. Although often described as antifeminist, tradwives frequently frame their practices using the rhetoric of individual choice and empowerment, rejecting explicit opposition to feminism while simultaneously distancing themselves from what they characterize as woke ideology and institutional feminism. In this sense, the tradwife phenomenon can be understood as part of an alt-right imaginary, in which narratives of gender order, nostalgia, and moral restoration are depoliticized and reframed as personal lifestyle choices. Moreover, it is also presented as a potential alternative for women to address the crisis of work and care under neoliberalism, portraying their lifestyle as more desirable than participation in the labor market. This imaginary operates primarily through affective, aesthetic, and everyday discourses rather than overt political messaging, enabling its circulation across mainstream platforms such as Instagram. Each tradwife must adapt this imaginary to the political context of her respective country to connect with the nostalgia and symbols associated with traditional gender regimes, generating a convergence between global elements and local realities.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative case study design combining multimodal qualitative content analysis with tools from discourse analysis, complemented by the analysis of follower comments as an entry point into processes of reception and meaning co-construction. The main corpus consists of reels published in 2025 on RoRo's Instagram account. From a total of 67 reels, a simple random sample of 58 posts was selected, ensuring a 95% confidence level. A purposive sub-sample of 14 reels was then selected based on their relevance to the tradwife trend and analyzed discursively. Additionally, a purposive selection of comments—prioritizing highly visible and interaction-generating responses—was examined to explore audience engagement and validation dynamics.

The findings reveal two interconnected ideological tendencies. First, the reinforcement of traditional gender roles within a patriarchal and heteronormative framework, positioning women as devoted caregivers, economically dependent, and professionally disengaged. Second, the normalization of content creation as a precarious, non-professional activity, framed as a hobby rather than legitimate labor. Together, these dynamics consolidate what we conceptualize as digital traditional lifebour: a form of platform-based self-branding that obscures professionalization processes while reaffirming traditional family values and relegating women to unpaid care work and constant male validation.

GSC04 Forms Of Backlash, The Manosphere and Anti-Gender Discourses

PP 0400 Gatekeepers of patriarchal dogma: Anti-feminist rhetoric and the prerogative of gender essentialism in female-led American conservative podcasting

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Gatekeepers of patriarchal dogma: *anti-feminist rhetoric and the prerogative of gender essentialism in female-led American conservative podcasting*

The proposed study examines the stringent evolution of the gendered discourse surrounding reproductive rights and the abortion dilemma within the disputed framework of the American far-right alternative media ecosystem. The targeted timespan lengthens between January 2022 and December 2025. This period is achingly characterized by monumental shifts in both the legal and the social milieu preceding and following the overturned *Roe v. Wade*. During this period of vulnerability sweeping through the masses and digital exploitation, the "womanosphere" began to thrive. This encompassed a convoluted network of conservative female podcasters who have become central disseminators of anti-feminist and hegemonic pro-natalist narratives.

More concisely, the study aims to address the paradox of the female podcasters advocating for the dismantling of their very own bodily autonomies and social emancipation by formulating and distributing anti-feminist commentary. Previous research has solely focused on male-dominated institutions or religious filaments, but there remains a significant gap in understanding the narratives projected by female podcasters who conflate wellness and morality with far-right policies and anti-feminist axioms. Rhetorical phrases such as "judgment", "isolation" and "community condemnation" (Cockrill et al., 2013, p. 79) begin to emerge in this niche more robustly and swiftly became coordinates of substantial validation.

From a methodological vantage point, the female-led conservative sphere, fabricated via individual audio productions or podcasts, comprises leading names, such as Allie Beth Stuckey's *Relatable* podcast, Candace Owens' *Candace* podcast, Pearl Davis's *JustPearlyThings* podcast, Brett Cooper's *The Comments Section*, Kristan Hawkins' *The Kristan Hawkins Show* or Julie Barrett's *Womansplaining*.

Utilizing a mixed-method approach, this research combines the quantitative inspection of the linguistic corpus with a qualitative, thematically inclined discourse analysis. The quantitative segment tracks the frequency, the collocation or the reach of specific keywords and expressions that annihilate any feminist infusion, such as biological reality, gender-critical complementarianism, foetal personhood or the sanctity of unborn life. As a symbiotic addition, the qualitative analysis identifies the underlying ideological frames and the scheming and knavishly refined rhetorical devices that support fearmongering, the transgressive appeal, networked intimacy and ultimately, the engendering of affective publics.

The preliminary findings reveal that the primary discursive pillars are founded on the rejection of autonomy for the privilege of gender essentialism, medical disinformation and skewed personal anecdotes as artifacts of empowerment and above all, the myth of the oppressed majority (Co, 2021, p. 7). The womanly configuration is thus, reduced to a domestic-preeminent

outlook where fertility is regarded as the highest civic duty, where contraception goes against a pre-determined universal order and where the liberal hegemony dismantles the holy family.

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GSC04 Forms Of Backlash, The Manosphere and Anti-Gender Discourses

PP 0401 Printed masculinities: An analysis of Pick-Up Artist books in the Italian manosphere

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Within gender and communication studies, the manosphere has been examined as a heterogeneous set of digitally networked communities in which antifeminist and male-centred discourses are articulated and circulated (Ging, 2017; Ging & Siapera, 2018). Recent scholarship has further suggested that the contemporary manosphere is undergoing an expansion toward explicitly economic and neoliberal discursive frameworks, increasingly articulating masculinity, intimacy, and gender relations through the logics of self-optimisation, market rationality, and entrepreneurial subjectivity (Gerrard et al., 2025; Iñigo & Ging, 2026). Building on this perspective, this article approaches the manosphere not merely as a set of online communities, but as a transmedia sociocultural ecosystem whose influence extends beyond digital platforms through the production and circulation of offline cultural artifacts which the manosphere discourses are reproduced, stabilised, and commercialised. Specifically, it examines 182 (self-)published Pick Up Artist (PUA) books distributed via Amazon in the Italian context, and the comments of the buyers on Amazon.

The study conceptualises these books as material nodes within a transmedia manosphere ecosystem, where digitally rooted narratives of seduction, masculinity, and gender relations are rearticulated through print-based self-help formats. Drawing on scholarship on mediated masculinities, neoliberal selfhood, and the cultural politics of self-help, the article addresses two research questions: (1) how is seduction discursively constructed in Italian PUA books, and (2) how do reader reviews contribute to the interpretation and legitimation of these constructions?

Methodologically, the study combines Structural Topic Modelling, STM (Roberts et al., 2014), with lexical and semantic analysis applied to a corpus of Italian-language PUA books. The analysis includes both book descriptions authored by writers and reader reviews posted on Amazon, enabling a comparative examination of authorial discourse and reader reception.

Results indicate a highly standardised and instrumentalised lexicon in which seduction is framed as a technical, goal-oriented, and transferable skill. Book descriptions are dominated by semantic fields related to techniques, mindset, control, and gender difference, while references to reciprocity, emotional relationality, or mutual desire are marginal. Seduction is primarily constructed through procedural and optimisation-oriented frameworks, positioning women as objects of strategic action rather than discursive subjects. Topic modelling further reveals systematic differences across authorship, with male-authored texts emphasising performance, discipline, and tactical mastery, and female-authored texts placing greater emphasis on emotional authenticity and “natural” attraction. Reader reviews, by contrast, foreground evaluative criteria related to usability, clarity, and perceived effectiveness, often framing the books in terms of personal transformation and practical outcomes rather than ideological content. Through these evaluative practices, readers contribute to the symbolic construction of PUA authors as credible experts operating largely outside established publishing and academic institutions.

By analysing PUA books as slow, material media embedded in platform economies, this article contributes to an emerging body of research that links the contemporary manosphere to broader neoliberal and economic rationalities. It demonstrates how the construction of gender relations and intimate practices becomes increasingly intertwined with market-oriented logics of optimisation, performance, and self-investment, highlighting the relevance of offline cultural artefacts for understanding the evolving political economy of masculinity and intimacy in contemporary capitalism.

GSC05 Representations and Comments in News Media

PP 0406 Gender medicine in the public eye: Written and visual coverage in Austrian newspapers between 2010 and 2025

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Medical education and research have been based on a specific male body prototype, weighing 80 kg and being 35 years old, for a long time, with little questioning of the transferability of findings to non-male bodies. From the 1980s the discussion of gender-related characteristics in terms of disease progression have begun to take shape, finally manifesting in the scientific discipline of gender medicine: Concerned with both mental and physical health, gender medicine acknowledges

(perceptions of) health and illness being linked to sex and gender and respective biological and social circumstances, and creates evidence of gender-sensitive treatment and diagnostics (see for example web appearance Medical University of Vienna / Gender Medicine).

The study addresses written and visual coverage of gender medicine in Austrian printed news media, which is relevant considering media constructions of gender being able to reinforce corresponding social expectations of behavior, and journalistic content being part of individuals' and social groups' larger health information repertoires (Fisse et al., 2024). It applied a quantitative content analysis of 224 news articles in a period of 15 years from 2010, when gender medicine was first institutionalized in Austria at the Medical University Vienna with a designated chair, to 2025. Articles were retrieved from quality journalistic, mid-market and tabloid newspapers with national reach, including Der Standard, Kronen Zeitung, Die Presse, Kurier, Kleine Zeitung, and Heute, using the APA-OnlineManager Library database and the German-language search term "Gendermedizin" (gender medicine). Informed by- "doing gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and intersectional perspectives (Crenshaw, 1991), the study explored written and visual content regarding main topics, thematic assignments (e.g. physical or mental health), main actors and speakers, allocations of needs for action (individual/micro-level, organizational/meso-level, systemic and societal/macro-level), biological sex or gender foci, connections to further identity characteristics (such as age, race, class), used visual image types, content, sources, functions, and placements, and depicted actors.

Results show that gender medicine is rather discussed as matter of individual responsibility and biological differences between the sexes, decoupled from societal structures and systemic imbalances. Visual representation remains on the surface, with generic images prevailing for dramaturgic purposes. The presentation will address study limitations and highlight contributions the analysis aims to provide. Regarding the latter, that is, finding longer-term thematic patterns in the coverage of gender medicine, integrating insights from gender (media) studies and health communication, and generating new knowledge to the scarce research body of gendered health visualizations in journalism.

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GSC05 Representations and Comments in News Media

PP 0407 What is written about #MeToo in Portugal? An analysis of digital newspapers

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#MeToo is one of the most prominent digital feminist activist movements of recent years (Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019; Loney-Howes et al., 2021; Mendes et al., 2018). Created in 2006 by African-American activist Tarana Burke, the movement only gained global visibility in 2017 after a Twitter post by actress Alyssa Milano, becoming a viral feminist hashtag and a transnational movement (Clark-Parsons, 2021). The widespread circulation of #MeToo through digital platforms expanded the movement granting it global resonance. In some national contexts, such as Portugal, #MeToo has been largely debated as a movement confined to the digital sphere (Prata, 2021) and to its discussion in the press.

This study analyses how #MeToo has been represented in the Portuguese digital press, focusing on the main topics and narratives present in journalistic coverage. The corpus consists of journalistic articles published between October 2017 and June 2022 in two national generalist newspapers, Público, a daily newspaper, and Expresso, a weekly newspaper. A search for the keyword "MeToo" resulted in 263 articles, including both news and opinion pieces. These articles were subjected to a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in order to identify, analyse, and report recurring patterns and themes.

The analysis identified four central themes: sexual harassment and violence; the questioning of (re)victimization and the normalization of violence; the ambivalence of feminisms within the #MeToo movement; and backlash against #MeToo and feminisms. The findings show that in Portugal the movement gained particular media prominence following the Mayorga versus Ronaldo case in 2018 and again in 2021, when women celebrities from different professional fields publicly shared experiences of harassment.

Nevertheless, the journalistic narratives analysed reveal a persistent ambivalence towards feminisms and #MeToo, expressed through favourable, unfavourable, and sometimes paradoxical positions. Sexual harassment and violence are portrayed either in ways that question victims' legitimacy or that normalize these forms of violence, resulting in a fragmented and non-consensual public discourse. While violence and harassment are acknowledged as social issues, the movement and its protagonists are simultaneously discredited, and backlash against feminisms is particularly evident in discussions

surrounding sexual violence. Additionally, the repetition of the same voices and public figures limits the diversity of perspectives represented in the coverage.

Overall, the results highlight the multiplicity and complexity of contemporary feminisms in a context marked by both progress and backlash. While the digital sphere enables wider national and global visibility for feminist causes, it can also reinforce paradoxical discourses and setbacks. The Portuguese case of #MeToo illustrates these tensions, revealing the ambivalent role of digital journalism in shaping feminist public debate.

Keywords

#MeToo; feminisms; digital journalism; Portugal

GSC05 Representations and Comments in News Media

PP 0408 Social impact of news coverage on gender violence prevention

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Gender-based violence represents a major social and public health issue whose prevention requires not only institutional policies and resources, but also an active and responsible role from the media. Journalism plays a decisive role in shaping interpretative frameworks, influencing public opinion, and either illuminating or distorting the causes, consequences and possible solutions to this form of violence. Consequently, it is essential to examine whether media coverage incorporates scientific evidence into its social impact and effectively contributes to prevention, while avoiding harmful effects such as revictimization or the normalisation of violence.

The SafeNarratives research project, funded by the Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of Spain, aims to analyse the current state of journalistic coverage of gender-based violence, with a particular focus on integrating scientific evidence oriented towards social impact in prevention. This paper presents the findings of a literature review of the scientific literature addressing the impact of news coverage of gender-based violence, understood both in terms of its preventive potential and its possible adverse effects, such as the revictimization of victims and survivors, as well as isolating violence directed at those who support them. Based on a structured search strategy conducted in the Web of Science database, 180 peer-reviewed scientific articles were selected and analysed. The results indicate that media coverage frequently prioritises sensationalist and episodic frames focused on isolated events, to the detriment of contextualised and evidence-based explanations, thereby undermining prevention efforts. Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that journalism can contribute meaningfully to the prevention of gender-based violence when it adopts a responsible approach grounded in scientific evidence with proven social impact. Although the literature highlights the transformative potential of such journalistic practices, their social impact has so far received insufficient attention. At the same time, the reviewed studies identify key conditions under which journalism can generate positive social impact, including thematic framing, contextualisation, adherence to ethical guidelines and the incorporation of scientific evidence with demonstrated social impact as the main sources of the news coverage. Editorial decision-making emerges as a crucial factor in orienting news coverage towards prevention. This review, therefore, constitutes an initial step towards advancing systematic research in this field.

GSC05 Representations and Comments in News Media

PP 0409 Towards Global Media Monitoring Project 2030 – Exploring new methodological trails in the coding practices of the international news flow study

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The Global Media Monitoring Project GMMP is an international news media study conducted every fifth year since 1995. The latest monitoring day was 6th of May 2025, and the next round of 2030 is to be planned for during the next years. This paper aims at presenting further sharpening of the coding practices for the future of this only remaining international news flow study, now contributed to by researchers in around a hundred participating counties. GMMP started out as a (binary) gender equality study thirty years ago and has grown into monitoring the interviewees and other news subjects in a more subtle way for every round. For example, the gender categories have developed from female/male via female/male/other into female/male/gender diverse. In 1995 the GMMP comprised journalistic news content in 71 countries, in 2025 the number of participating countries was 94. In 1995 the people represented as interviewees or other news subjects in legacy media (print, radio, television) were 17% female, while the number was 26% thirty years later (29% female people in news websites). Being a study that in 2025 comprised 30.049 separate news items and 59.563 interviewees and news subjects, it is worth continuing to perfect the coding methodology to get even more insights out of this effort engaging so many researchers and students in different parts of the world.

Albeit the improvements of the categorizations of the people monitored (e.g. gender category “other” changed into “gender diverse”), some limitations in the coding practices remain. The use of the concept of “minority” for example in the

coding question "Is this person depicted as part of a minority group (sexual, ethnic, racial, religious or other)?" bundles together people from different groups and does not take intersectionality into account. And—it can be read as it is used in everyday language as connoting to marginalised groups of people. But as "minority" literally means "a smaller number", it is not a functioning concept in a study that monitors the power relations between people of different group belongingness through the distribution of numerical representation. It is evident that privileged minorities and minorities that are in as good a societal position as the majority, should not be coded as minorities in the everyday language usage sense as people belonging to groups that are marginalised in society in one or another way are. For example, the Sámi people and the Swedish language minority in Finland are both minorities by number, but their societal position in relation to the Finnish majority is different. Also, another challenge with the concept is that a group of people obviously can represent the majority of the people living in a country or region and thus be even strongly marginalised. This paper suggests sharpened focus on vulnerable groups of people whose gender, sexuality, ethnicity, language or religion marginalises or disconnects them from participating fully in the core of the society.

GSC05 Representations and Comments in News Media

PP 0410 User comments in Slovak journalism when it's popular, male, gay, and without consent: The case of Fero Joke

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In recent years, the view on the issue of sexual violence in Slovak society has been inconsistent. Specifically, with the diversity of opinions, topics such as sexual consent are often understood in public discussions as well as on media platforms in contradiction with the recommendations of experts, human rights and non-governmental organizations. Therefore, themes like consent covered by the media appear to be controversial. The dynamics in society in connection with consent can, for example, be characterized by the current state. The Slovak government has been repeatedly called upon by NGOs such as Amnesty International Slovakia (2025) to include a definition of rape in the criminal law, emphasizing that sexualized violence is based on the absence of consent in sexual activities, and to ratify the Istanbul Convention. This research examines the case of Slovak comedian Fero Joke (František Košarišťan) from December 2025, which has been associated in the media with topics such as consent, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexuality, sexual orientation, masculinity, or victim blaming. Fero Joke, a well-known Slovak comedian and influencer, an openly gay man and supporter of the LGBTQ+ community, according to his statement and the statements of the victims, sexually harassed two men who attended one of Joke's performances in Prague in December 2025. The information became public after the victims posted a video about their experience on the social network Instagram. The main objective of this research is to examine the readers' perceptions of the Fero Joke case with a focus on the content analysis of comments from users of selected media. The research methodology is based on content analysis, which, with reference to previous studies of this type (Reimer et. al. 2023), is also used to analyse user comments in journalism. Consequently, the content analysis in this research focuses on user comments in discussion sections of articles in widely read Slovak online daily newspapers such as Denník N, SME, or Pravda published in December 2025. The content analysis is accompanied by Judith Butler's (1990) perspectives on the concepts of social structure, violence, and masculinity, which the research draws on when grasping the terms related to the subject of analysis. Hence, the following question arose: How do commenting users on the platforms of Slovak online daily newspapers Denník N, Sme, and Pravda perceive the issue of consent in the context of articles about the Fero Joke case published in December 2025? The findings of this research so far suggest that the Fero Joke case highlights the need to examine how media audiences respond to a complex event, and that views on consent can be influenced particularly by male-on-male sexual harassment, power dynamics between the two parties involved, audience favouritism, and the history of the victims.

GSC06 LGBTQIA+ and Media II: Representations, Experiences and Place-Making

PP 0513 Lost in representation: Italian adolescents' practices of recognition and disalignment vis-à-vis LGBTQIA+ representations in social media

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Early accounts of digital media framed online platforms as spaces of liberation, visibility, and identity experimentation for LGBTQIA+ people. Within gender and communication studies, visibility has often been treated as a proxy for recognition and social progress. More recent scholarship, however, has questioned this assumption by foregrounding the role of platform governance, algorithmic selection, and commercial logics in shaping which gendered and sexual subjectivities become visible, legible, and socially legitimate.

The goals of this contribution are to:

- investigate how LGBTQIA+ adolescents in Italy perceive, interpret and negotiate digital representations of queer identities on social media (with a focus on Instagram and TikTok);
- explore tensions between authenticity, visibility, and recognition;
- analyse practices of distancing, silence, and selective sharing as forms of agency.

We adopt a mutual shaping of gender and digital technology approach, focusing on how users negotiate with platforms affordances; we build on feminist and queer media studies that conceptualize digital platforms as ambivalent spaces of empowerment and constraint (Duguay, 2016; Hanckel et al., 2019; Selkie et al., 2019). We also engage with the notion of algorithmic imaginary (Bucher, 2016) to analyse how adolescents make sense of opaque systems of content selection and virality, and how these perceptions shape their evaluative practices. The analysis also draws on the distinction between master and alternative narratives of gender and sexuality (Barsigian et al., 2023), showing how even representations positioned as alternative or counter-hegemonic may reproduce standardized aesthetics, performative expectations, and engagement-oriented formats. In this sense, the paper contributes to gender and communication scholarship by problematizing normative models of queer visibility and authenticity (Kreling et al., 2022).

We draw on in-depth interviews with 21 people who self-identify as LBGTQIA+, aged 16–18, living in Italy. Interviews were informed by prior exploratory focus groups and co-designed with a group of adolescents acting as epistemic partners (Holmes & Marcus, 2012; Livingstone & Third, 2017), ensuring sensitivity to participants' language, meanings, and everyday experiences. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The findings highlight four interconnected dimensions. First, adolescents actively manage visibility through selective disclosure, multiple accounts, and audience segmentation, conceptualizing privacy as relational and negotiated rather than individual (Petronio, 2002; Ebert et al., 2023). Second, many participants express symbolic distance from queer representations perceived as overly performative, stereotypical, or commercially driven, echoing processes of disidentification (Jenzen, 2022). Third, recognition is strongly mediated by tone, aesthetics, and narrative style: content perceived as sober, intimate, and experiential fosters empathy and identification, while spectacularized or "rainbow-washed" representations often generate discomfort or refusal (Cover, 2022; Illouz, 2022). Finally, adolescents demonstrate a critical awareness of algorithmic logics, linking visibility and virality to opaque systems of selection rather than to authenticity or representativeness (Bucher, 2016; Parisi & Firth, 2023).

We can conclude that visibility emerges not as a neutral or universally positive condition: we need to reconceptualize it as a plural, situated, and negotiated concept.

GSC06 LGBTQIA+ and Media II: Representations, Experiences and Place-Making

PP 0514 Sex Education and Back to 15: Representations of diversity under Netflix's grammar of transnationalism

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This paper analyzes how the Brazilian series *Back to 15* (2022–2024) and the British series *Sex Education* (2019–2023) exemplify Netflix's strategic use of "diversity" to build a transnational audience. Drawing on the "circuit of culture" approach (Du Gay et al., 1997), we discuss how the platform's "grammar of transnationalism" (Jenner, 2018) emphasizes certain markers of difference while obscuring others, including national cultural markers.

The study is part of an ongoing doctoral project investigating the meanings attributed to diversity within its circulation in contemporary media culture. It examines the articulation between the appropriation of this notion by global audiovisual platforms (specifically Netflix) and its subsequent (re)appropriation by consuming audiences. This specific piece explores the transnational facet of the circulation of diversity through Netflix productions, focusing on the process of representation, one of the five processes that constitute the circuit of culture.

The investigation is situated amidst intensifying struggles for media visibility and recognition by historically subordinated and marginalized groups. Concurrently, large global media companies, in response to market demands and the acceleration of globalization, have been strategically adopting diversity in their corporate discourses to segment the global market. This strategy is central to the emergence of new transnational television models.

In Netflix's case, a diversity strategy is a key element for its transnational expansion. It is applied to segment global markets by appealing to a cosmopolitan, transnational audience and by positioning the platform as an upright and progressive actor. This strategy integrates Netflix's overall "grammar of transnationalism": a set of "specific textual features that make texts viable in a reciprocal relationship across borders" (Jenner, 2018, p. 220). These features include: the use of globally recognizable narrative genres; a version of history marked by depoliticization, drawing more on the history of media culture than on historical reality; an emphasis on aesthetics; an appeal to a progressive humanism grounded in Western value systems presented as "universal"; and multilingualism. All of this operates within what has been referred to as a "quality TV" paradigm.

The employment of this grammar of transnationalism reflects the fundamental transnational character of Netflix's production, which increasingly takes place in different countries but considers a global audience from the outset. However, this strategy raises questions regarding the risks of commodifying identities while increasing their visibility, as well as the homogenization of representations of specific cultural identities. *Back to 15* and *Sex Education* were selected because they both heavily address issues related to diversity, including transgender experiences and fluid sexualities, within different national contexts with strong television traditions: Brazil and the UK. This comparative approach allows us to assess Netflix's transnational strategy and its consequences for diverse representations in the contemporary landscape.

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GSC06 LGBTQIA+ and Media II: Representations, Experiences and Place-Making

PP 0515 Queering the map: how queer Muslims of Palestine are online

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Queer Palestinian Muslim experiences of online visibility are shaped by, and respond to, wider forces of Islamophobia, nationalism, and global queer rights discourse in the context of Israel's ongoing occupation of Gaza. Since October 7, 2023, renewed international queer solidarity with Palestine has emerged alongside intensified pinkwashing and homonationalist narratives that position Israel as a protector of LGBTQ+ rights while portraying Palestinian and Muslim societies as inherently homophobic. These discourses render queer Muslim identities contradictory or unintelligible, mobilising queer rights to legitimise colonial violence and obscure both Israeli homophobia and systemic human rights violations.

Drawing on theories of queer visibility, homonationalism, and intersectionality, the article argues that queer Palestinian Muslims occupy a uniquely precarious position within global debates on sexuality and rights. They are simultaneously marginalised by Islamophobic assumptions within Western queer politics and by homophobic interpretations within their own communities, all while living under occupation, surveillance, displacement, and mass violence. As a result, visibility becomes a contested and risky practice rather than an unqualified marker of liberation.

Centering Queering the Map (QtM), a community generated mapping platform as a case study to explore how queer Palestinian Muslims negotiate visibility under these conditions. QtM's anonymous, location-based digital architecture enables queer Palestinians to narrate experiences of desire, grief, fear, and belonging without the exposure demanded by mainstream LGBTQ+ visibility politics. Through analysis of QtM entries, we conceptualise online visibility as an act of resistance that simultaneously refuses both erasure and instrumentalisation. Rather than affirming homonationalist models of queer rights tied to state recognition, QtM facilitates forms of queer self-representation grounded in survival, memory, and collective witnessing. QtM reveals how queer Palestinian Muslims use digital space to challenge Islamophobic and nationalist framings of queerness, exposing the limits of Western queer rights paradigms while articulating alternative modes of belonging that refuse colonial logics. In doing so, the article reframes visibility as a fragile, strategic, and deeply political practice shaped by ongoing violence and resistance.

GSC06 LGBTQIA+ and Media II: Representations, Experiences and Place-Making

PP 0516 "I don't belong here": Digital colonialism, platform power, and LGBTQIA+ vulnerability in South India

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This completed study investigated how LGBTQIA+ activists in South India perceive and manage vulnerability on Western-centric Big Tech social media platforms. British colonialism introduced Section 377 to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), criminalising homosexual relationships as 'unnatural' and pushing LGBTQIA+ to the margins. After gaining independence, it stayed in the IPC until the landmark 2018 ruling. However, colonial legacy persisted, contributing to regressive attitudes and animosity. Similarly, social media sites that were previously praised for their LGBTQIA+ visibility are today used to spread discrimination, unequal power relations, and intolerance (Jacob, 2025). This development raises worries about Big Tech operating as neocolonial entities, undermining the agency and visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities in the global south.

This paper employs digital colonialism as an analytical framework to examine how US-based technology corporations reassert historical colonial power relations while simultaneously producing new forms of domination through control over data, digital infrastructures and platform economies (Kwet, 2019). While the concept of digital colonialism has gained increasing traction, existing scholarship has failed to interrogate its effects on historically marginalised communities, including India's LGBTQIA+ populations. Moreover, attempts to universalise digital colonialism reduce colonialism to a loose metaphor, neglecting the enduring legacies of Eurocentrism, colonial values and structural violence that continue to shape lived experiences in postcolonial contexts. These omissions are consequential for LGBTQIA+ communities in India, whose

contemporary marginalisation is inseparable from colonial histories of regulation, moral governance and legal repression. At the same time, much LGBTQIA+ research in India remains geographically and socially constrained, privileging English-speaking, urban, technologically literate queer populations in North India. This study directly addresses these gaps by centring marginalised LGBTQIA+ experiences beyond dominant urban and linguistic frameworks, and by re-embedding digital colonialism within the material, historical and cultural realities of postcolonial India.

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on semi-structured interviews with 24 LGBTQIA+ social media activists from three South Indian states - Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Participants were selected using purposive sampling due to their visible, sustained activist engagement on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, and their work supporting queer communities across the region. Interviews were conducted in participants' native languages (Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada), translated and transcribed into English by the researcher, and analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. The interview is audio recorded, and all participants provided informed consent.

The findings identify three interconnected themes that highlight how digital colonialism intensifies the vulnerabilisation of LGBTQIA+ communities in South India. Firstly, participants described heightened forms of vulnerability shaped by the reactivation of colonial moral logics online, alongside targeted harassment, coordinated hate speech and digitally mediated violence. Secondly, participants noted how platform governance regimes, which included content moderation, reporting mechanisms, community standards and practices such as shadow banning, systematically reproduce and exacerbate these vulnerabilities. Thirdly, participants articulated psychological and emotional harms, leading to withdrawal from online spaces and practices of self-censorship. Taken together, these findings extend digital colonialism by demonstrating how platform governance, when entangled with postcolonial social contexts, actively produces and sustains forms of digital queer vulnerability.

GSC06 LGBTQIA+ and Media II: Representations, Experiences and Place-Making

PP 0517 Walking the tightrope: LGBTQIA+ media in Azerbaijan

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Queer media exist, also in hostile environments, yet their strategies to keep afloat remain underexplored. Even in the homophobic and transphobic spheres of Post-Soviet states, a pink press has managed to endure despite LGBTQIA+ prosecution, discrimination, and control (Szulc, 2020). Still, this heighted visibility can backfire and produce increased surveillance.

In our paper, we focus on Azerbaijan, a country that sits at the crossroads of Soviet, Turkish, and Iranian spheres of influence. It is one of the least hospitable places for queer people (UN, 2024; Jesus, 2025). Yet, despite the dire situation, there are queer media—but how? (Aliyev, 2017; Rashidova, 2022). More precisely, we ask: What kind of media profile do publications targeted at the queer Azeri-speaking audience maintain? The question refers us to their visible output that is the touchstone for readers and at the same time the most evident document for censors and an antagonistic majority society. Analyzing the kind of content provided and the framings offered will help us, we argue, to appreciate queer media's tightrope walk of staying relevant for their audience while dodging prohibition.

We conducted a manual content analysis and inductive framing analysis of all digital outlets associated with Azerbaijan's LGBTQIA+ community. The framing analysis particularly looked for the existence of diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames. The dataset includes 2,474 items in total: 332 articles from *Minority Azerbaijan Journal*, 1,257 posts from *Minority Azerbaijan*'s Instagram account, 333 posts from the NAFAS LGBT Azerbaijan NGO platform, 10 episodes from the *Nafas LGBTI Azerbaijan* Spotify podcast series, 293 posts from the *Qıyvar* platform, and 18 episodes from the *Qıyvar* Spotify podcast series. The audio content was transcribed before analysis.

The findings demonstrate that Azerbaijani LGBTQIA+ community media deploy differentiated yet interconnected framing strategies across platforms to sustain visibility, solidarity, and resistance under conditions of repression. *Minority* primarily adopts diagnostic framing, foregrounding discrimination, violence, homophobic attacks, and legal inequalities, while also incorporating motivational elements through coverage of NGO support and activist initiatives. In contrast, its Instagram account is dominated by prognostic framing, emphasizing visibility through queer representation, global LGBTQIA+ developments, educational content, and positive role models, alongside continued attention to rights violations. *Nafas LGBTI*'s Instagram presence is largely shaped by motivational framing, centering on solidarity, social and legal services, Pride-related activities, and domestic activism. *Qıyvar* presents a more balanced mix of diagnostic and prognostic frames, combining reporting on local homophobic violence and rights issues with global agendas and awareness-oriented content, while also highlighting key legal cases.

Overall, the material makes clear that queer Azeri media do not fall silent about topics deemed problematic by the heteronormative society. They extensively cover homophobic attacks and the LGBTQIA+ rights situation in Azerbaijan. Their strategy to cope with hate speech and legal actions is not self-censorship. Rather, it seems that in reaction to the hostile environment, the publications rely on a highly precarious yet flexible infrastructure of queer activists, some of which not based in Azerbaijan, easy-access platforms, and financial sponsorship, often coming from outside of the country.

GSC07 Feminist Solidarity and Queer Resistance Through Media

PP 0620 Mediating resistance under authoritarian repression: Strategic visibility in digital feminist activism in Iran

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The growing popularity of digital media platforms in Iranian society coincided with the conservative takeover in 2005, intensifying the suppression of women's rights activists. This led to the most discriminatory conditions for Iranian women, rendering part of the women's movement underground. Since the political structure has afforded minimal opportunities for women's movements, public debates regarding women's issues have increasingly shifted to digital platforms, creating a substitute public sphere where Iranian women's considerable presence has transformed these platforms into a battleground for resistance.

This study investigates how Iranian feminist activists strategically appropriate affordances of digital platforms to challenge gendered inequalities and reshape public discourse under politically constrained conditions between 2017 and 2022. Drawing on multi-sited ethnographic analysis of key digital and hybrid campaign, I examine how activists leverage digital platforms to perform resistance, circulate counter-narratives, and build collective memory.

Engaging with Bart Cammaerts' mediation opportunity structure and its attention to media, discursive, and networked affordances, this study extends this framework to authoritarian contexts. I argue that visibility offered by digital media operates as both a vital resource and a site of vulnerability. Activists contest a complex political and media ecology marked by state surveillance, misogynistic backlash, discursive delegitimization, and geopolitical co-optation. The analysis traces how activists navigate these tensions across hybrid environments where online and offline spaces intertwine.

The study demonstrates that increased visibility through digital feminist activism exposes activists to systematic backlash from state and pro-government media, which craft strategic narratives through interconnected strategies of securitization, othering, and devaluation. Yet activists have disrupted official narratives through compelling visual storytelling and counter-narratives. The research reveals how networked practices extend beyond national borders, employing platforms' transnational potential while creating digital archives that preserve movement history and sustain collective memory. By demonstrating how Iranian activists use digital platforms not simply as tools but as contested spaces where feminist agency and legitimacy are continuously negotiated under constraints, this research extends mediation opportunity structure theory to repressive contexts. It contributes empirical depth to understanding how visibility itself becomes an ambivalent terrain where feminist activists navigate power, surveillance, and strategic resistance under authoritarian conditions.

GSC07 Feminist Solidarity and Queer Resistance Through Media

PP 0621 "I want to be the cool abla from Instagram, the big sis you can talk to." – Muslim Women of Colour and their digital subject positioning in post-migrant Germany

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Digital platforms are crucial for Muslim Women of Colour (WoC) in Germany who want to gain visibility on their own terms. As content creators they use versatile media practices in digital spaces and produce content for a variety of platforms: They present empowering self-images on Instagram and YouTube or produce podcasts to comment on gendered everyday racism. By doing so, Muslim WoC voice their diverse perspectives and bring change through creating alternative media content in this post-migrant media landscape.

Confronted with the expectations of their own 'communities' on the one hand and the pressures of the dominant society on the other, Muslim WoC use digital public spheres as spaces to negotiate self-determined subject positions. My study investigates the conditions under which these transmedial negotiations take place and aims to understand the subject positionings Muslim WoC resist and those they invest in.

To explore these questions, the presentation is theoretically informed by the work of Cultural Studies. Drawing on feminist and postcolonial theories of subjectification research, as well as media space theories, self-positionings are understood as ongoing social processes of appropriation and engagement with subject positionings. These develop within the hegemonial context of external positionings and structural subject positionings (Walgenbach, 2014, 82). This study frames such processes as being shaped by particular conditions in digital spaces, where self-positionings are performatively (re)configured and mediated by digital practices that can disrupt traditional biopolitical paradigms of space and open up renegotiations of feminist self-positionings (Tuzcu, 2016, 150–154).

In this presentation, these possibilities are examined as part of a qualitative study. It is based on eight qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with Muslim WoC journalists and content creators. The interview participants include successful influencers such as Dalal Mahra, founder of the media platform 'Kopftuchmädchen' (Headscarf Girl(s)), and Erva Yılmaz, initiator of the queer-feminist podcast 'Gedankensalat' (Thought Salad). The analysis applies the grounded theory method.

The results show how the ambivalent confrontations with criticism and hate speech in digital spaces motivate and undermine Muslim WoC as they engage with structural subject positionings in the German (media) public sphere(s) and with external positionings from their marginalised groups. My presentation highlights in detail, how Muslim WoC, in the context of this post-migrant society (Foroutan 2021), find ways to construct new intersectional subject positions as post-migrant feminists with their own stories by resisting essentialist and othering classifications and investing in media practices of solidarity. In their role as influencers, they put effort into connecting with various groups and take on responsibilities to act with care towards them. In doing so, they navigate between the role of an experienced and knowledgeable "abla" (Turkish for "big sister") and that of a supportive "friend" and educator or discussion partner. Thereby, they transform the German media landscape into a more inclusive space.

This study empirically contributes to understanding how feminist marginalised voices in a post-migrant society take advantage of digital media spaces' emancipatory potential for societal transformation and at the same time find solutions for the limitations they impose.

GSC07 Feminist Solidarity and Queer Resistance Through Media

PP 0622 Creative methodologies for feminist alliances: 'Cine dialógico' as a case study

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Our presentation is an illustrated paper that establishes a dialogue of our voices with excerpts from the film in progress, Cine Dialógico. This audiovisual work emerges from the British Academy research project 'Filmmaking and the Academy in Times of (Dis)Order: Deep Listening | Dialogue | Diffraction' and both the project and the film are collectively built through support and labour from networks of feminist activists and local institutions. Cine Dialógico moves across remote geographies to reflect on a project that uses audiovisual technologies to foster conversations between feminist activists in four historically linked cities: Havana (Cuba), twinned with Glasgow (Scotland), and Matanzas (Cuba), twinned with Vilanova i la Geltrú (Catalonia). We explore how non-budget, collaborative filmmaking can encourage experience-sharing between activists in the Global South and North to develop translocal networks of support and solidarity. By developing this cross-cultural project within specific patriarchal states—both capitalist and communist—Cine Dialógico rethinks local-authority twinning. It shifts focus towards the often-unheard voices of nonstate actors, using their exchanges as material for creating 'alliancial thinking'. Through participants' voices across the four cities, the film tackles feminism's multilocality—the various sites where it is remade daily, within and beyond universities and borders, through creative acts. Concretely, audiovisual technologies are used as tools for deep listening, setting encounters in motion, and amplifying voices marginalised by corporate media and institutional regulation. This aligns with the need for a "restitution of the space of enunciation and of the times of audibility" for subaltern voices that can "(dis)organise in, from, for the South in every audible interruption, restoring a History from below" (Alvarado, 2022: 53). Through making films together-apart, we—the participants in Matanzas, Havana, Vilanova, Glasgow, and ourselves—offer our voices and seek others whose voices will be heard in the process, the film, and its exhibition. For us, listening opens a gate to further develop alliancial thinking, a prerequisite for building material alliances. During the presentation, we expect to share an invitation to imagine collectively what film can do to open a space for utopian and translocal imaginings—an alternative form of being together, virtually or physically.

GSC07 Feminist Solidarity and Queer Resistance Through Media

PP 0623 Livelihood as a Communicative Regime: Hierarchies, solidarity, and urban survival under gendered marginalization in Izmir, Turkey

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This study examines how sex work shapes community dynamics, communication practices, in-group perceptions, and urban settlement structures among trans women living in İzmir, Turkey. Situating sex work not only as an economic activity but as a social and communicative condition, the study explores how everyday interactions are structured through shared yet uneven experiences of labor, risk, and survival. Drawing on in-depth interviews with Turkish trans women aged 19–46, the research analyzes how peer networks operate as key sites where communication, belonging, and hierarchy are continuously negotiated. The findings identify three interrelated patterns. First, sex work intensifies intra-community bonding. Shared experiences of marginalization, exposure to violence, and economic precarity foster dense networks of mutual care, trust, and information exchange. These networks function as informal support systems through which participants share safety strategies, emotional labor, and practical knowledge necessary for navigating everyday life in the city. Second, sex work actively regulates communication and relational dynamics by producing internal hierarchies of recognition, jealousy, and exclusion. Community relations are shaped by differential access to aesthetic capital, perceived attractiveness, and economic success, which determine who is respected, envied, or rendered socially peripheral. Participants describe how social authority, credibility, and influence—both within the community and in interactions with clients—are closely tied to bodily presentation, market value, and accumulated economic resources. Communication thus becomes a site

where status is performed, contested, and reinforced. Third, sex work structures spatial communication practices, shaping where trans women live, circulate, and socialize within the city. Access to safer neighborhoods, housing options, and social spaces is unevenly distributed and closely linked to income, visibility, and conformity to aesthetic norms. These dynamics reproduce spatialized hierarchies that map social inequalities onto the urban landscape. Overall, the study argues that sex work operates as a constitutive communicative force that organizes social relations, status hierarchies, and spatial belonging. By foregrounding the interplay between structural violence and creative survival, the analysis highlights the social and communicative significance of sex work as a survival mechanism—one that simultaneously produces solidarity and stratification, shaping economic relations, community dynamics, and urban settlement patterns.

GSC07 Feminist Solidarity and Queer Resistance Through Media

PP 0624 Block, report, repeat – How technological skills shape agency in queer sexting

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Sexting, defined as the act of sending and receiving of suggestive or sexually explicit media through various devices, has become a standard part of digital intimacy for queer people. Even though sexting can play a positive role in building self-esteem, healthy sexual exploration and providing an insight into intimacy, previous research shows that queer people are more likely to experience the possible negatives of sexting, such as coercion or pressure to engage in sexting.

Majority of research describes queer people as primarily the subjects of negative experiences, without sufficient acknowledgment of their agency in coping with and shaping those experiences. Consequently, how queer people handle negative interactions in sexting, and how they attempt to avoid such interactions, has not yet been adequately addressed in the literature. Our article addresses this research gap by focusing on following research question: How do queer individuals engaging in sexting deploy technological skills to manage risk and safety within spaces of digital intimacy?

Our study has revealed that the attention of our communication partners when engaging in sexting is not limited to fulfilling their desires, but also attentively extends to the strategic ways of using blocking features, learning about safe data storage, using tools for anonymizing, and more. Our research has shown that queer people possess a great number of different technological skills to ensure safety and manage boundaries. Such skills overreach outside of sexting as well, with providing technological knowledge to queer peers also engaging in sexting. This set of skills is a way of emphasizing agency in online spaces. While non-queer people might also develop technological skills when it comes to safety and agency, queer people are more prone to additional possible threats of queerphobia or being outed against their will, making it crucial to have such skills.

We have conducted 24 interviews with self-identified queer people above the legal age of 18 years that have been actively sexting in the last 12 months. We have coded the data in Atlas.ti and analyzed them using thematic analysis. The results challenge research portraying queer people engaging in sexting only as helpless in context of negative sexting experiences and focuses research of queer sexting beyond sexuality and desire. Researching technological skills queer people develop and use when sexting is important, as it could serve as a helpful tool for sexual education and an inspiration for app developers that want to ensure user safety.

GSC08 Gender issues in journalism

PP 0732 De-contextualizing as a media process: TV news and gender-based violence against women in Austria

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Television news are a central site where gender-based violence against women* becomes publicly intelligible. While existing research has extensively examined how such violence is framed or made visible in news discourse, less attention has been paid to the processes through which violence is turned into a news event. This paper addresses this gap by focusing on de-contextualization as a key media process in television news reporting on violence against women*.

Drawing on an ongoing PhD project, the study examines Austrian television news coverage from 2017 onwards. The analysis does not approach news items as fixed representations or containers of meaning. Instead, it understands de-contextualization as a dynamic process through which social, relational and gendered dimensions of violence are reorganized within episodic, event-centered narratives. In this sense, de-contextualization is not simply the absence of context, but an active restructuring of meaning that privileges immediacy, visual dramatization and institutional perspectives.

Methodologically, the paper adopts an ethnographically informed media-analytical approach that combines close analysis of narrative structure, text–image relations and visual sequencing. Attention is paid to how spoken commentary, visual material and editing practices interact across news segments and to how interpretative boundaries are produced through these interactions. Rather than identifying stable categories or typologies, the analysis reconstructs how meaning is shaped within the flow of television news.

The paper examines how de-contextualization contributes to the constitution of gender-based violence against women* as an individualized and exceptional occurrence, while broader gendered power relations tend to remain marginal. By foregrounding singular events and immediate actors, television news shape the conditions under which violence can be understood as a structural social phenomenon. This perspective opens up questions of how responsibility, causality and social relevance are communicated to audiences.

By theorizing de-contextualization as an analytical media process rather than an analytical outcome, the paper contributes to research on gender, sexuality and communication by offering a conceptual framework for examining how television news organize public knowledge about gender-based violence. The study thus advances feminist media analysis by focusing on the conditions of representation, without presupposing normative evaluations of journalistic practice.

GSC08 Gender issues in journalism

PP 0733 The precarious 'one-woman show': Overload, self-management and mental health in freelance journalism

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In the field of journalism, atypical and precarious work has increasingly been recognized as the "new normal". Although discussions of precariousness in journalistic labor are extensive, they have largely focused on newsroom-based work. One form of atypical labor that has gained visibility is freelance journalism, whose analytical relevance has intensified in the contemporary scenario. While freelance work is not a new dynamic within the field, it acquires new contours in the current context, marked by the valorization of an entrepreneurial neoliberal subjectivity in which notions such as autonomy, freedom, and flexibility occupy a central place. From a gender perspective, postfeminist discourses tend to frame women's successful participation in the labor market as the result of individual merit and personal effort, while presenting the ability to personally achieve "work and life balance" as a key condition for "having it all". Within this framework, success and failure are individualized, while structural critiques of labour conditions and gender inequalities are frequently silenced. Public debate thus shifts toward individualized solutions centered on self-management, personal initiative, and resilience, obscuring the effects of broader structural transformations of work. This work-in-progress paper aims to examine how the individualization of labor relations in freelance journalism produces experiences of overload and self-management among women journalists, with impacts on mental health and personal life. Methodologically, the study is based on a reflexive thematic analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with women freelance journalists in Brazil and Portugal, as part of an ongoing doctoral research project. The sample comprises 31 interviews carried out between 2023 and 2024 with 31 women who self-identified as freelance journalists. The analysis focuses on how the individualization of work materializes in everyday practices and experiences, centering on accounts related to work organization, time management, task multiplication, and emotional and affective experiences associated with freelance journalistic activity. Preliminary findings indicate that overload emerges as a structural condition of freelance work and is frequently described by interviewees through the metaphor of the "one-woman show/band". This expression encapsulates the continuous accumulation of journalistic and extra-journalistic tasks, from story sourcing and pitching to financial, administrative, and ethical decision-making, performed individually and on a permanent basis. Despite recognizing the structural conditions of precarity, interviewees demonstrate a strong internalization of individual responsibility for managing both work and well-being. The accounts further suggest that, while freelance journalists value flexible working hours and attempt to establish what they consider healthy boundaries around work, they face constant demands for availability and increasingly blurred boundaries between work and personal life. These conditions are frequently accompanied by feelings of powerlessness and frustration and, in some cases, by experiences of burnout, anxiety, and depression, associated with processes of medicalization. The study highlights the need to consider journalistic work outside traditional newsrooms as a central axis for critical communication studies and the political economy of media, highlighting the mental health of women freelance journalists as a labor and gender issue inseparable from contemporary transformations of work in the field of communication.

GSC08 Gender issues in journalism

PP 0734 Intersecting precarity. A study of experienced precarity amongst Swedish journalists

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Sweden as the champion of gender equality hides persistent inequalities. Previous studies show that these shape journalists' working lives. Ongoing digitalization have reconfigured newsroom practices and intensified demands for flexibility, contributing to job insecurity, blurred boundaries between work and private life, and adverse mental-health outcomes. And these pressures are gendered. The transformation of Swedish media organizations has simultaneously weakened collective professional power and strengthened employer control, normalizing temporary contracts, and staffing-agency placements, while eroding employment security and professional autonomy. For many journalists, flexibility and freelancing functions less as autonomy than as compulsion, and this is not equally distributed as previous research, including my own, indicate.

I argue that one can not only understand such complicated structures looking only at one structural factor, but they must be understood intersecting different power structures. This paper, thus, examines how gender intersects primarily with age and ethnicity in experiences of precarity among Swedish journalists.

I draw on 23 in-depth, thematic interviews conducted in 2018–2019 and 2022 with journalists who self-identify as precarious workers. Participants were recruited via a trade-union contact and an open call in the Facebook group *Journalistbubblan*. The sample includes 6 men and 16 women, 3 of non-Swedish ethnicity, aged 25–57, working mainly in newspapers; many held short-term contracts or were placed through staffing agencies. All had higher education, including a journalism degree. Interviews (1–2 hours) were conducted on campus, as a safe space, or online (cf. Melin & Wiik 2024).

The analytical framework combines three connected concepts: ***precarity*** (the systemic normalization of insecure work, here in Media, as Deuze discusses), Bauman's ***liquid life*** (the dissolution of stable boundaries between personal and professional spheres), and Bourdieu's ***gendered habitus*** (how embodied dispositions and social positions pattern access to resources and recognition).

Findings show that precarity is stratified by intersecting social positions. Young journalists struggle to establish themselves; older face redundancy and outsourcing pressures; minority women and younger women report compounded barriers. Those described being passed over for promotions, seeing ideas sidelined, and facing implicit expectations of self-branding and constant networking – practices experienced as unevenly gendered. In fluid, short-term labour markets, traits such as extroversion, social ease, and rapid adaptability are valorised, and perceived to advantage men. The affective load of contingent employment is significant: participants recounted stress, fatigue, and episodes suggestive of anxiety or depression. Yet commitment to journalism and its public mission keeps many invested – or stuck – as they repeatedly pursue the stability of a permanent contract.

I conclude that Swedish journalism's precarity is not an individual misfortune but structurally produced and differentially borne. Addressing it requires measures that curb reliance on temporary staffing and agency placements, strengthen Swedish traditional collective bargaining and welfare protections. Central is to confront ageism, gender and ethnicity discrimination, and to understand that discriminatory structures intersect. Without such reforms, the profession's democratic role is undermined by a labour regime that offloads risk onto those, least able to handle the precarious side of journalism.

- Melin, M. & Wiik, J.(2024) Living the liquid life: *Nordic Journal of Media Studies.*

GSC09 Shifting Narratives in Advertising and Audiovisual Media

PP 0830 Gender representations and persuasive advertising in gambling brands communication

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In recent years, the gambling sector has emerged as a leader in the use of internet technology and experiential marketing by using gamification and influencers to shape behaviors and stimulate consumer loyalty (Gainsbury et al., 2015; Guillou-Landreat et al., 2021; Hing et al., 2017; Reith, 2013). Since gambling is not only a common social activity but also an industry heavily influenced by cultural norms and regulatory frameworks unique to various societies (Fannin et al., 2024; Guillou-Landreat et al., 2021), this expansion has been identified as a public health issue (Fannin et al., 2024; Palmer du Preez et al., 2021; Ukhova & Prever 2024).

The literature highlights that women's participation in gambling is increasing, and gender perspectives are essential for understanding negative experiences and effects (Lelonek-Kuleta; 2022; Wardle, 2017). Patriarchal norms, gender roles, and advertising stereotypes shape women access and gaming motivations (Holdsworth et al., 2012; Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017). According to studies (Casey, 2024; Lelonek-Kuleta, 2022; Palmer du Preez et al., 2021), women frequently use gambling as an emotional coping mechanism for stress, loneliness, or financial pressures. Additionally, because of the telescoping phenomenon, women are more likely than men to develop an addiction (Castrén et al., 2018; Fonseca et al., 2021).

Based on existing literature, through our exploratory investigation, we aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the communication and promotional strategies used in gambling advertisements aimed at women. The goal of the current study is to identify the discursive framework, persuasive mechanisms and gender representations that underpin these advertisements. This study examines how advertising rhetoric is expressed in relation to gender dynamics, sociocultural norms, and processes of normalizing gambling behaviors through an analysis of gambling advertisements targeting women in Romania. Thus, we aim to provide a useful analytical framework for developing intervention and regulatory directions in the field of gambling.

In order to implement our research strategy, we decided to use a thematic analysis of eighteen promotional videos that targeted women and belonged to the biggest gambling companies. According to preliminary findings, advertisements frequently include aestheticized representations of success, feminine independence, and personal comfort, while risks are minimized or absent. According to Dowling et al. (2016) and Guillou-Landreat et al. (2021), these communication typologies are very compelling to women who are emotionally or financially vulnerable and can cause gambling disorders.

GSC09 Shifting Narratives in Advertising and Audiovisual Media

PP 0831 From reel to reality: Ageing on screen and the perception of later life representations among older adults in Belgian fiction films (1945–2022)

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Research in cultural and media studies has long prioritised youth, while ageing and later life have only recently gained scholarly attention. Existing research remains largely centred on Hollywood films (Chivers, 2011; Dolan, 2013) or limited to specific genres and periods (Kline et al., 2023; Markov & Yoon, 2021; Lauzen, 2025). While these studies have made important contributions, there remains a need for longitudinal research that traces changes over time and for analyses that move beyond Hollywood-centric film cultures. This presentation addresses these gaps by outlining my PhD research on the representations of older adults in Belgian feature fiction films (1945–2022), as well as on how older adults themselves perceive these representations and how they would reimagine ageing, later life, and older age on screen.

The research is made up of four studies examining the representation of older adults, ageing and later life in Belgian fiction films, through: (I) a quantitative content analysis of the 15 per cent most popular majority-Belgian films across eight decades (1945–2022), (II) a qualitative content analysis of 145 films from the same period, identifying recurring tropes of ageing femininity, with textual analyses of *The Departure, Death of a Nun, The Over the Hill Band,* and *Behind the Clouds*, (III) a thematic analysis of precarity in later life in contemporary Belgian fiction films (2000–2022), supplemented by textual analyses of *Many Heavens* and *Irina Palm*, foregrounding gender differences of economic and social precarity on screen, and (IV) a creative and participatory study in which older adults rewrote a self-selected scene from the film *Rosetta*, followed by in-depth semi-structured interviews discussing both their rewritings and their perceptions of media representations of ageing, and later life.

The findings reveal a persistent underrepresentation of older adults in popular Belgian feature fiction films. Although the presence of older characters has increased over the past two decades, significant gaps remain. Older characters lack diversity: they are predominantly white, middle- or upper-class, non-disabled, young-old (65–74 years), and heterosexual. Notably, young-old women are overrepresented compared to young-old men, pointing to an unexpected gender difference in the representations. However, the qualitative content analysis identified only four dominant tropes for older women: *ageing as decline, grandmothers at the top, heroines of ageing,* and *rebels with a cause*. Thus, although women are over-represented, their roles are very limited.

Older adults are also largely depicted as living financially and socially comfortable lives, despite Belgian statistics showing that older adults, alongside young adults, face the highest risk of poverty and social exclusion (Statbel, 2024). When precarity in later life is represented, it primarily affects older women, particularly through care responsibilities that result in economic and social precarity. Finally, interviews with older adults reveal a representation-recognition paradox: although participants note a growth in the number of representations, they rarely recognise themselves in them. These representations tend to oscillate between ideals of *successful ageing* and *narratives of decline*, leaving little room for the in-between experiences of ageing and later life.

GSC09 Shifting Narratives in Advertising and Audiovisual Media

PP 0832 Shifts in the representation of fatherhood in spanish audiovisual fiction: Berto Romero and imperfection through humour

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In the contemporary sociocultural landscape, the conceptualisation of masculinities has shifted from a monolithic model to a plurality of socially and culturally constructed practices (Mercer & Smith, 2025). This change has placed the male body and identity at the epicentre of a set of intense tensions that construct the so-called contemporary crisis of masculinity and, consequently, hierarchise emerging masculinities in the public sphere. Based on the premise that "media culture is a fundamental site in the construction, distribution and meaning-making work of masculinities" (Mercer & Smith, 2025:14), this presentation will focus on analysing how celebrities, as key figures in Spanish popular culture, can negotiate the contradictions of fatherhood through their public media image and their audiovisual productions.

The analysis will be carried out using the case study of comedian and actor Berto Romero and his series *Mira lo que has hecho* (2018–2020). Its premiere in 2018 coincided with a crucial moment in Spain, as various shifts in the representation and social expectations of fatherhood were observed. Methodologically, this research combines the theoretical and analytical frameworks proposed by *Celebrity Studies* —focused on the management of public figures and the analysis of media paratext— with the contributions of *Masculinities Studies* in terms of the representation of fatherhood. Specifically, a textual analysis of the series and the construction of Romero's public figure will be carried out to identify the key discursive mechanisms that enable this negotiation of fatherhood.

The central thesis of this paper is that the figure of Berto Romero crystallises the emergence of a fatherhood that eschews strict polarisation and perfection. Previous categorisations distinguished between the traditional Spanish model of fatherhood, seen as a figure of authority, economic provision and emotional detachment (Jerónimo, 2023), and "new" fatherhood, which emphasises the father's commitment and emotional involvement with his children (Freeman, 2003). It is argued that Romero offers a unique approach to the concept of the "good-enough father" (Freeman, 2003), the imperfect father, through the strategic use of irony and taboo humour. According to Luca and Barra (2016), this type of humour can be ambivalent, as it is capable of both questioning and sustaining hegemonic structures. Romero's work ultimately reveals the inertia and contradictions characteristic of a generation grappling with shifting expectations of fatherhood. These are difficulties that arise when trying to reconcile ideal conceptions of fatherhood with the experiences of parenting itself. Therefore, this work shows how Berto Romero, through humour, models a more humanised fatherhood and negotiates gender roles regarding fatherhood in Spanish popular culture and its audiovisual fiction.

GSC09 Shifting Narratives in Advertising and Audiovisual Media

PP 0833 Masculinity and sociopolitical shifts: revisiting the narratives and negotiations around masculinity in Estonia

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Recent public discussions in Estonia (and many other countries) surrounding the rise of the manosphere, toxic masculinity and (extreme) right-wing political movements centering gender issues have brought pressing questions regarding masculinity to the forefront. A study among Estonian 15-year-olds found that a gaping divide in values regarding gender roles and equality is emerging among boys and girls, where the former are becoming increasingly conservative and the latter more progressive (Ümarik et al., 2022). However, most of the studies exploring men and masculinity in Estonia were conducted in the 2000s and 2010s, highlighting a need to critically revisit this theme (Aavik, 2024).

Theoretically, this study draws on gender studies, particularly Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity and concepts from critical studies of men and masculinities, such as hegemonic and hybrid masculinities (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Connell, 1987). However, it avoids typologising masculinity, as problematised by various academics (e.g., Allen, 2023), and instead aims to adopt a material-discursive approach to critically examine men and masculinities (Hearn, 2014).

This study aims to explore the narratives surrounding men and masculinity in Estonia. It employs a combination of individual semi-structured interviews (n = 16) and group interviews (n = 3) with men from various age groups (ranging from ages 23–68), educational backgrounds (high schools, vocational schools, university), work fields and living environments (rural and urban). Participants were asked to reflect on issues relating to the (de)construction of masculinity, emotional vulnerability, relationships with friends and partners, parenthood, mental health and their positioning towards public narratives about masculinity. Group interviews included a creative component where participants mapped influences on masculinity. The data collection phase is set to finish in January 2026. Analysis combines thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and visual analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) for the creative outputs of group interviews.

Initial results indicate that dominant narratives among men often rely on biological essentialism with limited acknowledgment of the socially constructed nature of gender. Masculinity is often tied to economic well-being, while using material means to express care in the family. Media narratives surrounding men are often perceived as negative and unjust, which is often attributed to the manipulative nature of clickbait journalism and the attention economy. Interviewees describe absent fathers in their childhood, which they describe as a motivating factor for expressing care and emotional investment in their own family lives. The results of this study are crucial for understanding how the dominant narratives surrounding masculinity among men relate to the problematic sociopolitical phenomena outlined in the beginning.

GSC10 Visibility, Agency and Struggles in Media Representation and Reception

PP 0810 Neoliberal feminist articulations of emancipated femininity: Sanna Marin's negotiation of double binds of gendered leadership

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Women leaders, classical studies have shown, are caught in so-called "double binds" where leadership is equated with masculinity and femininity is positioned outside the political sphere, challenging women leaders' credibility either as leaders or women (e.g., Jamieson, 1995). Accordingly, they are at high risk of failing to build credibility as they must navigate contradicting expectations. Tensions of gendered leadership remain relevant today, as contemporary media play a central role in constructing and perpetuating double binds, shaping public evaluations of women leaders' credibility (Bordo, 2017). Some political actors are, however, redefining the possibilities of gendered leadership. Notably, the case of previous Prime Minister of Finland, Sanna Marin, who has transitioned to a career in political advising, suggests changing conditions of possibility for simultaneously performing "woman" and "leader."

In this study, by drawing on critical perspectives on neoliberal feminism and popular-/postfeminism, we investigate how Marin negotiates gendered norms, through her insistence on being "free to be herself" (e.g., Adler, 2024). We argue that Marin can be viewed as a critical case of one prominent strategy for resolving the double bind: namely, that of "leaning in" to difference and celebrating the specific performance of the individual woman in question (e.g., Sandberg, 2013). This strategy became apparent after an infamous leak of footage of her dancing with friends at a private party in 2022. Under the monicker of "partygate", the incident resulted in a global media scandal that questioned Marin's credibility as a national leader. Instead of listening to critics and seeking to adapt to the tight line of the double bind, Marin's performance of certain stereotypically feminine traits became more pronounced and defiant in the wake of "partygate."

To understand how Marin negotiates double binds, we conducted a two-party study. First, by using a selection of news media and women's magazine articles, we conducted a descriptive analysis where we mapped the main incidents and gendered media scandals that shaped her credibility as head of state, and that, as we argue, ultimately led to what we call her "postpolitical emancipation." Second, by collecting posts and stories from her Instagram, we conducted an interpretative analysis of her own articulation of her postpolitical identity. Through these analyses, we found an evolution in her gendered performance, culminating in what we call "emancipated femininity." Marin, we argue, resolves traditional double binds by individualizing gendered emancipation, however, on the other hand, she creates new gendered norms that even she herself must now always maintain. In this study, then, we identify persistent tensions between individual empowerment and structural inequities, offering critical insights into intersectional conditions of possibility for gendered performances in the context of mediated politics.

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GSC10 Visibility, Agency and Struggles in Media Representation and Reception

PP 0811 Invisible fathers? Media discourse of non-transferable parental leave in Lithuania

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The European Union (EU) Directive (2019/1158), adopted in 2019, aims to structurally change the division of childcare within the family by establishing a non-transferable two-month parental leave entitlement for each parent. This provision aims to encourage fathers to become more actively involved in childcare, reduce the burden of childcare on women, and promote gender equality in the labor market (European Union, 2019). In Lithuania, this measure came into force in 2023; however, statistics indicate limited use of this measure, with approximately 1,340 men taking advantage of the non-transferable months in 2023 (Sodra, 2024).

In this context, discussions about non-transferable months of parental leave have intensified not only in politics but also in the media, which plays an important role in shaping social norms and stereotypes (Keuper, 2022). Previous studies have shown that parental leave policies are mostly framed positively in the media, emphasizing economic well-being, gender equality, health, and inclusive parenting (Korsvik & Warat, 2016; Valarino & Bernardi, 2010, 2011). However, less attention is paid to how specific policy measures and the associated images of masculinity and fatherhood that shape a father's identity are framed in the media.

Our research aims to analyze how the Lithuanian media framed non-transferable months of parental leave from 2018 to 2025, what images of fatherhood are constructed within them, and how these discourses are reflected in fathers' experiences. The study is based on critical discourse and framing theories. The empirical analysis consists of two parts: semi-structured qualitative interviews with fathers who have taken non-transferable months of parental leave, and a critical discourse analysis of articles published on the most widely read Lithuanian news portals.

The results of the research show that non-transferable months of parental leave are often "invisible" in the public sphere. The participants in the research indicated that they had seen almost no clear, consistent, and reliable information about this measure in the media or had only encountered fragmentary messages. The media was assessed as a source of information with limited reliability and poor accessibility.

An analysis of news portal articles reveals that the majority of articles published on Lithuanian news portals consist of unoriginal texts created by the media, but also include press releases prepared by governmental and non-governmental organizations. In original media articles, non-transferable months of parental leave are often framed as a means of conflict- a threat to the family, coercion, or financial loss to fathers- and the articles are dominated by the voices of politicians rather than family policy or gender equality experts. The results of this research complement previous research by revealing that although parental leave policy is often framed positively in the media (Korsvik & Warat, 2016; Valarino & Bernardi, 2011),

non-transferable months of parental leave stand out in the Lithuanian media as a controversial and often negatively framed measure, whose discourse contributes to the normalization of limited father involvement.

GSC10 Visibility, Agency and Struggles in Media Representation and Reception

PP 0813 From endurance to defiance: Women's agency in contemporary television drama of Pakistan

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The tele-drama has become one of the most important arenas of culture in Pakistan in which gender norms, moral values, and social hierarchies are both constructed and contested in a narrative form. The women in tele-dramas often play key roles in representing endurance, resistance, and agency. In this article, we will focus on how women's agency is represented in contemporary Pakistani television dramas, examining the transition from endurance to defiance in a patriarchal framework. We used qualitative textual analysis of a corpus of four prime-time Pakistani tele-dramas that aired between 2020–2025, and two of those were recent productions of Pamal (2025) and Case No. 9 (2025) for our analysis.

Using feminist media theory and representation studies, the analysis includes the structural elements of narrative, dialogic exchange and visual framing. The analysis of endurance was conducted through repeated representational strategies such as emotional restraint, silence, repetition of suffering, and moral placement of female characters within family-based spaces. These strategies construct patience and sacrifice as feminine virtues, reinforcing gendered expectations of compliance and respectability, especially in relation to domestic and relational contexts. Additionally, the article analyzed narrative transitions at which point endurance turns into defiance. Through the analysis, the authors found that defiance is rarely represented as an impulsive act and is instead legitimised through suffering, ethical standing, and conformity to socially acceptable values. Therefore, women's agency is constructed as conditional and mediated rather than unqualified. This work demonstrates that Pakistani television drama represents a site of ambiguous gender politics in which patriarchy is reinforced while at the same time allowing women some degree of agency through their resistance. Ultimately, the growth of defiant female protagonists in recent tele-dramas illustrates the increasing cultural tension and possibility of new forms of representation of women's agency; however, the study also illustrates the continued restrictions placed on women's agency through television narratives.

GSC10 Visibility, Agency and Struggles in Media Representation and Reception

PP 0814 Navigating visibility – young Bedouin women students' digital participation under infrastructural gaps, social control, and political pressures in Israel

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The Bedouin community in Israel is a structurally vulnerable minority, shaped by socio-economic marginalization and strong conservative norms. While digitization has expanded educational and employment opportunities, studies of digital inequality show that excluded groups often reproduce online disadvantage, through limited access, lower digital capital, and limited participation.

In higher education in Israel, the digital divide between Jewish and Bedouin students has persisted for decades and became more visible during the war, as academic learning and institutional communication shifted online. Common barriers include inadequate communications infrastructure, unstable connectivity, and lower levels of digital literacy. However, for Bedouin women, digital participation is shaped not only by access but also by gendered power relations, family monitoring, and community expectations that regulate online expression.

This study examines how cultural, familial, and institutional conditions intersect to shape the digital practices of young Bedouin women during their academic studies. It uses a quantitative design based on an anonymous online questionnaire distributed in November-December 2024 through educational institutions and student-only WhatsApp groups. The sample includes 200 Bedouin female students. The measures addressed internet access, social media activity, learning-related uses, and perceptions of monitoring and control.

The results show that only 32.5% reported regular internet access, indicating persistent infrastructural inequalities even among higher education students. At the same time, social media presence is widespread (85.2%). Their social media posts focus primarily on social (66%) and personal (17.7%) issues, while political expression is minimal (1.5%) and stems from concerns about censorship. Some of their digital activity is linked to their student identity and therefore some of their internet use is learning-oriented (73%), with an emphasis on coursework and educational experiences. The majority, 87.6%, reported a strong sense of control due to family and community norms, alongside concerns stemming from political sensitivities.

The findings point to a multidimensional digital divide that combines access constraints with gender surveillance and socio-political pressures. The study discusses the implications for higher education institutions and calls for culturally

responsive digital inclusion strategies that address infrastructure and skills while addressing the social conditions that silence women's voices online.

GSC11 Articulations of Activism in Media and Field Work

PP 0917 "She's SO tacky… I LOVE her": Class distinction and the moral surveillance of celebrities among young women in Spain. Unpacking "the Choni, the Pija and the Chonija"

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The "choni", the "pija" and the "chonija" are local categories, which emerge from fieldwork with young women in Spain that reveal that judging a celebrity is an implicit mechanism for social positioning. This research explores how female audiences navigate and negotiate their own class and gender identities through high-impact celebrities, by contrasting the perceived "excess" of the *choni* (*chavy girl*) with the "traditional respectability" of the *pija* (*posh girl*), and the emerging "hybrid opulence" of the *chonija* (*chav-ish rich girl*).

This research is theoretically framed by the intersection of postfeminist sensibility (Gill, 2007) and the sociology of social class and it moves beyond an aesthetic analysis of media to explore the moral economy of celebrity reception. Based on Bourdieu's (1979) theory of distinction with Lawler's (2005) conceptualization of class as a moral property, the study argues that celebrity figures function as symbolic arenas where the legitimacy of female identities is scrutinized.

While international scholarship has theorized the "New Rich" through figures such as the "WAG" or the "glamour girl" (Biressi & Nunn, 2005), and the "celebrity chav" (Wood & Skeggs, 2011), there is a lack of empirical research on how these archetypes are hybridized in contemporary Southern Europe. This study addresses this gap and introduces the concept of the "*chonija*": a figure who might possess high economic capital (or not) but maintains an aesthetic and behavioral code that the traditional elite labels as "vulgar" or "*wannabe*".

This qualitative study employs a multi-method design based on the triangulation of 4 focus groups (n = 24) and 10 semi-structured interviews, with a total sample of 34 women (aged 20–30) in Spain. The participants were segmented by cultural capital (high and low) to observe how social trajectory shapes the interpretation of celebrity culture. The focus groups captured collective discursive negotiations of femininity and class-based labeling, while individual interviews provided subjective depth to explore class and gender anxieties. The data was processed through Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and identifies recurring patterns across thematic axes which include motherhood, family, professional success, aesthetics, and romantic relationships.

The analysis reveals that the celebrity functions as a mirror for the women's own class anxieties, though the judgment is far from uniform. High cultural capital participants often display a complex "post-ironic empathy" towards the "choni" aesthetic, using it as a tool for distinction to distance themselves from the "rancid" or rigid stigma of the traditional "pija", summarized in the sentiment: "She's SO taky… I LOVE her". On the contrary, a sharp class consciousness among other participants triggers a political critique of the celebrity's opulence as an "insult" in a context of precariousness. In other cases, moral surveillance over the celebrity's family acts as a "dignifying" tool. Notably, labels like "*chonija*" serve as discursive safety valves, which allow women to process the frustrations of the neoliberal mandate and contest the legitimacy of those who have "made it".

GSC11 Articulations of Activism in Media and Field Work

PP 0918 Contested bodies: A longitudinal, computational analysis of trans athlete representation in UK and US legacy media

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In recent years, anti-trans narratives have increasingly shifted from the political margins to the mainstream, driven by strategic alliances among right wing, populist, religious and conservative actors (Hines, 2025). This convergence has politicised trans bodies, with tangible impacts on access to public participation, healthcare and legal recognition. Elite sports have become a key battleground, where trans athletes face increasing exclusion. In the UK and US, news media play a pivotal role in amplifying gender-critical discourses (McCann, 2023) that support bans on trans athletes from competitions (Fae, 2023). This study critically examines how trans athletes are represented in legacy media across the UK and US over an 11-year period. Drawing on a corpus of 10,629 English-language articles, the research employs BERT-based topic modelling and RoBERTa sentiment analysis to uncover dominant discursive frames and emotional tone in media coverage.

Findings reveal seven dominant frames across 24 prominent and unique topics: (1) medical and biological discourse (2) prominent athletes (3) sporting bodies, (4) legal and policy frameworks, (5) political influence, (6) financial, and (7) social media commentary. Most topics exhibited multiple dominant frames, highlighting interconnected and crosscutting narratives. Polarity differences between athlete-focused and policy-focused topics reveal a dual-track framing strategy: positive sentiment clusters around athlete narratives, while negativity concentrates in governance and legislative debates.

This bifurcation complicates prior claims of one-sided hostility (Palmer, 2023; Monteil-McCann, 2023) and suggests that polarisation is frame-contingent rather than monolithic.

Over time, coverage shifts towards politicised governance frames, weaponizing trans athlete participation as a wedge issue in broader culture wars. Transwomen athletes are often portrayed through cisnormative lens as threats to the fairness and safety of ciswomen. Media narratives of trans athletes often serve as fuel for political actors to mobilise moral outrage and reassert symbolic control under the guise of fairness. These representations contribute to moral panic, legitimise exclusionary policies and marginalise trans voices in media and sports institutions. Recommendations are made for ethical journalism, inclusive media practices and the centring of trans perspectives to challenge exclusionary framings and promote equity in sports discourse.

GSC11 Articulations of Activism in Media and Field Work

PP 0919 Emotions from the fieldwork: Navigating ethnography research on digital feminist activism

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Abstract This paper is a methodological contribution presenting a personal experience of a critical self-reflexive research journey, negotiating the fluctuating positionalities between being an insider and an outsider while researching digital feminist activism. This reflexive ethnography reflects on a cluster of small but significant methodological decision-making, emotional challenges, conundrums and uncertainties that I faced during conducting online and offline fieldwork over the first eight months (September 2022-April 2023) of the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement in Iran during a revolutionary moment in the history of Iran's women's movement. This paper tells the story of my study focused on how women practiced resistance against the state and patriarchal culture by sharing their feelings, recalling their own memories of violence and inequality, weaving their personal and life experiences into digital narratives communicated by textual and visual content, and how they found a voice across multiple platforms and spaces, and simultaneously imagined collective alternative futures for themselves and other women in Iran. It highlights the emotional engagement in feminist research, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and reflecting on the emotional dimensions of the research process. This research journey can be seen as a situated example of how to negotiate one's positionalities, dealing with ethical dilemmas and personal emotions during ethnographic encounters in offline and online research settings, especially when researching sensitive contexts. By making the emotional challenges and methodological struggles typically hidden in ethnography visible, this reflexive account offers examples of how to navigate the dilemmas of positionality in sensitive research contexts. It reveals the messy, rather than straightforward, process of decision-making, showing that researchers' emotions that can inform the research design and analysis are worthy of documentation. Furthermore, the ethnographic observations documented in this study provide valuable insights into the dynamics of social media platforms and the socio-political context of Iran during the initial months following the "Woman, Life, Freedom" movement. Within the conceptual framing of critical reflexivity and feminist methodology, and grounded in these established fields of scholarship, this paper is informed by questions such as: How does a researcher's insider/outsider positionality shape interactions in both offline and online research, particularly in politically sensitive contexts? How can researchers' affect, and emotions be understood both as part of the research process and as valuable research data in feminist methodology? Documenting the behind-the-scenes emotions and uncertainties researchers experience provides suggestions to others facing similar challenges.

GSC11 Articulations of Activism in Media and Field Work

PP 0920 Make-up activism on TikTok: Between popular feminism and 'artivist' strategy

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Throughout history, the relationship between make-up and feminism has been ambivalent. While some feminist positions critique make-up as a tool of discipline that reinforces normative beauty standards and commodifies women's bodies, others emphasize its potential for empowerment, self-expression, and the disruption of gendered stereotypes. This tension is particularly visible in recent feminist protest practices on social media.

On TikTok, make-up videos have emerged as a flexible and highly visible genre of feminist resistance. Some activists post fake make-up tutorials that 'hijack' the popularity and algorithmic visibility of beauty content on the platform to circulate political messages on topics such as state violence, sexual abuse or hate speech. Other videos stage elaborate make-up routines that culminate in simulated bruises or blood, turning practices of beautification into visual acts of protest against gender-based violence.

Our paper discusses these TikTok trends as part of a larger, transcultural visual protest culture that we define as "make-up activism." Drawing on case studies from the Iranian *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement and Latin American protests against femicides under the hashtag *#NiUnaMenos*, we analyze the contested, and at times contradictory relationship between make-up activism and (popular) feminism. While make-up activism resonates with neoliberal notions of individual

empowerment and the commercial logics of platformed feminism, we argue that it also reclaims the aesthetics of popular feminism for political movements that are driven by a collective struggle for structural change.

From an interdisciplinary perspective at the intersection of political science, visual communication and art history, the paper frames make-up activism on TikTok as a form of 'artivism' that blurs boundaries between activism, art, and everyday digital culture. By turning their faces into canvases and using the vulnerability of their bodies as a medium of protest, TikTok activists draw on a much longer, transcultural history of feminist performance art. While this history is overlooked in most studies of video activism on social media, we suggest that make-up activism reactivates this artistic lineage within platform-based protest, combining it with the visual languages of popular feminism and street mobilization.

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GSC11 Articulations of Activism in Media and Field Work

PP 0921 Exploring care work and digital media (non)use among professional cleaners

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This research aims to better understand the role of digitisation in shaping the conditions of care work that maintains everyday life. I do so by particularly focusing on the professional cleaning industry and consider their work as part of the social reproductive work necessary to re-produce the everyday lives of those they clean for. I focus on this population group because digital disconnection and critical data studies research has shown that care work, and hence also gendered divisions of labour (Bhattacharya, 2017), take part in shaping how digital media and technologies are (and are not) used (Huws, 2019; Lai, 2023; Van Bruyssel et. al., 2024).

However, so far, digital disconnection and wellbeing studies have largely focused on middle to upper-class population groups and presupposed more obviously digitised professions such as office work. This has left a blind spot in understanding what digital media (non)use translates to in more precarious and marginalised workplaces, and if these concepts keep their relevance in these contexts and life-worlds. In turn, critical data studies and digital surveillance fields have shown that digital technologies reify existing structural inequalities shaped by intersections of gender, class and race (Brown, 2015; Eubanks, 2018; Gillespie, 2016). Hence, centring the professional cleaning industry brings forward precarious working conditions and a largely female and migrant labour force (Safuta & Camargo, 2019) that allows to analyse how precarity, care work and digitisation shape experiences and possibilities with digital media (non)use.

To gain a relational understanding I will conduct a three-month ethnographic fieldwork with six professional cleaners from April to June 2026. On the one hand, I will map out their relations to the institutions, employers and clients, and their entwinement in mundane digital devices and digital infrastructures like surveillance technologies. These relations will be mapped out on the backdrop of Tronto and Fischer (1990), and Puig de la Bellacasa's (2017) understanding of care as a relational, political and affective process. This will result mapping out who receives care, who gives it to whom and how, as well as who or what creates the conditions and resources for that care work to take place.

On the other hand, I aim to understand how these paid care working conditions shape cleaners' lives outside work and the social reproductive work that must still happen for themselves and those they care for. By following participants throughout their day in and out of their cleaning work I aim to better understand how care work permeates the various spheres of their lives with and through digital technologies. By doing so, this research aims to broaden an understanding of what it takes to be digitally "well" and questions how attainable it is when gendered, classist and racialized inequalities shape the structural conditions in which human flourishing is expected.

GSC12 Disinformation, Gendered Violence and Communicative Regimes

PP 1025 Rape myths in online discourse: A qualitative analysis of user comments on German social networking sites

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The recent case of Dominique Pélicot in France reaffirmed how rape myths (Burt, 1998) continue to inform understandings of sexual violence – even among perpetrators, who, in certain instances, mobilised such myths to justify their actions (Hofmann, 2024, Prange de Oliveira, 2024). Building on this broader concern, this study explores how rape myths are articulated in user comments on German news reports about (attempted) rape, posted on social networking sites. We

examined the evolving forms these myths may take in contemporary online discourses, drawing on script theory (Schank & Ableson, 1977), gender studies (Purucker 2017). We understand rape myths as cognitive shortcuts embedded within broader gendered social scripts that regulate sexuality and sexual violence (Bohner 1996). Within patriarchal cultures, these myths operate not simply at the level of individual belief and understanding, but as communicative and cultural resources that normalise gendered power hierarchies, legitimize male sexual entitlement, shape how sexual violence is publicly discussed, interpreted, and justified.

This qualitative study employed a deductive–inductive content analysis of 504 user comments responding to 98 Facebook posts linking to news articles on (attempted) rape published by five regional and national German newspapers in 2024. The analysis focused on how rape myths were articulated within these discussions, drawing on a deductive categorisation of rape myths (Burt, 1980), which was subsequently extended and refined through the development of inductive subcategories. The study sought to understand how rape myths are reproduced, negotiated, and adapted within contemporary online discourse.

The analysis identified the presence of rape myths previously described in the literature (e.g. Burt, 1980), including victim-blaming narratives as well as the minimisation or complete denial of sexual violence. In addition, the coding process led to the development of new subcategories within the myth type 'rapists are sex-starved', capturing references to the (assumed) migration background of alleged perpetrators as well as racist stereotypes interwoven with existing rape myths. A corresponding subcategory was also created within the contradiction category to reflect comments explicitly challenging such racist associations. Furthermore, two additional contradiction categories were developed: 'critique of victim blaming' and 'critique of perpetrator exoneration'. These enabled the coding of comments that rejected core functions of rape myths – such as blaming victims and downplaying perpetrator responsibility – where they did not refer to specific, previously described rape myth types.

Taken together, the findings illustrate how rape myths circulate and are negotiated within everyday online communication, functioning as shared cognitive and communicative resources through which sexual violence is interpreted. These myths are not only reproduced but are also adapted and, at times, contested, as users draw on and challenge broader cultural scripts to make sense of sexual assault. In some instances, racialised assumptions entered these meaning-making processes, shaping how responsibility, credibility, and harm were discussed. In this respect, the study contributes to ongoing work within the Section Gender, Sexuality and Communication by demonstrating how narratives surrounding sexual violence are constructed, debated, and re-circulated in contemporary media environments.

GSC12 Disinformation, Gendered Violence and Communicative Regimes

PP 1026 What is gendered disinformation? A theoretical multi-level approach

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Individuals in the public arena, such as politicians and journalists, are often targeted by violent attacks. Recently, these kinds of abuses, many of which are misogynistic, have been exacerbated by Artificial Intelligence (Bates, 2024). AI-manipulated text, photos, and videos, including sexually explicit deepfakes, are examples of gendered disinformation (GenDis), which translates into the weaponization of gender stereotypes and intersectional identities (i.e., race and ethnicity) in multiple flows of violence (Gehrke & Amit-Danhi, 2025), using misleading, defamatory claims (Stolze, 2025).

This study offers a novel theoretical multi-level model of GenDis to conceptualize an emerging strand of research that unites rather than separates approaches to gender and disinformation. Informed by critical disinformation studies (Kuo & Marwick, 2021), decolonial feminist theory (Vergès, 2020; 2021) and illiberal public spheres (Bennet & Kneuer, 2024; Štětka & Mihelj, 2024), our model comprises three levels: (1) The patriarchal order, as the underlying systemic, violent, and exploitative ideology, (2) the societal level, which entails socialization into gender norms, and dynamics of oppression, and (3) the content level, which entails individual and in-group defamation via misleading anti-gender content. We argue that gendered disinformation occurs primarily at the intersection of levels 2 and 3, with level 1 as the overarching structure that enables and upholds the system.

Women and LGBTQIA+ individuals are particularly at risk of being targeted and might quit the public arena (Sobieraj, 2020). Circumstances leading to refraining from political participation are related, for instance, to having their faces and bodies violently exploited in Non-Consensual Intimate Imagery (NCII). In some countries, such as the United States, reports have shown that women are 70 times more likely than men to become targets of sexualized deepfakes (Rodriguez & Mithani, 2024). In Germany, the only female candidate of recent chancellor elections, Annalena Baerbock, was disproportionally targeted by disinformation campaigns (Smirnova et al., 2021). In Brazil, black and indigenous women were punished with narratives anchored on stereotypes of race and ethnicity (Gehrke, 2025).

To be clear, men can also be targeted with gendered disinformation, particularly if they do not comply with the gendered expectations prescribed by hegemonic masculinity, such as being dominant and expressing anger (Smiler, 2019). Our model therefore accounts for intersectionality, and we argue that patriarchy is a system of exploitation and oppression that harms

everyone, with some groups of people being affected more than others. That is, some groups have historically profited from dominating unconscious schemes of perception and appreciation (Bourdieu, 2001).

The exacerbation of gen-AI in combination with the ongoing democratic backsliding and anti-gender backlash witnessed in Europe and elsewhere comes from a colonial tradition of gendered, sexualized, and racialized patterns of violence that continues to perpetuate (Sánchez-Acochea, 2021; Vergès, 2020). "Gender" becomes the external force to be blamed for the loss of patriarchal power in the family and the State (Butler, 2024). Theorizing the distinct levels of GenDis is now crucial to advancing our understanding of the phenomenon and promoting societal change.

GSC12 Disinformation, Gendered Violence and Communicative Regimes

PP 1027 The role of social media in anti-gender mobilization: Exposure, endorsement, and political participation

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The anti-gender movement—a transnational mobilization of a loose constellation of actors contesting feminist and LGBTQIA+ claims through the notion of "gender ideology"—represents a significant phenomenon in the contemporary political landscape, with profound implications for democratic life and civil rights.

Over the past two decades, research has highlighted the crucial role of social media in political activism, populist dynamics, and the construction of like-minded political communities. For anti-gender organizations, social media function as a strategic infrastructure for circulating newsletters and petitions used to quantify and legitimize support and to influence decision-making processes. A growing body of scholarship has shown how digital media are employed to disseminate anti-gender narratives, disinformation, and conspiracy theories targeting LGBTQIA+ people.

It is therefore essential to investigate the role of social media in the dissemination of anti-gender discourse. Yet, most studies have focused on observational analyses of social media data, while more general population-based research on the impact of social media remains scarce. This study helps to address this gap by assessing the relationships between social media, exposure, endorsement, and political participation in relation to anti-gender discourse, based on a sample of 800 Italian adults representative by gender, age, and area of residence.

First, the prevalence of anti-gender beliefs in the population is measured, contributing new data to recent efforts in this area. The analysis then documents how frequently respondents encounter anti-gender content on social media, comparing this exposure with that observed through other channels such as television, newspapers, or informal conversations.

The focus subsequently shifts to digitally mediated forms of participation, examining the extent to which individuals actively engage with anti-gender content on social media (e.g. commenting, sharing, and participating in online discussions), thereby directly and indirectly contributing to its salience. In light of the low levels of commitment required by digital interaction—sometimes criticized for having limited political impact—the study investigates whether and how these forms of participation are connected to more demanding political actions, ranging from signing petitions to participating in offline protests and electoral choices. In particular, it examines whether a candidate's position on so-called "gender theory" constitutes a relevant criterion for voting.

Overall, the findings provide new evidence on the role of social media in the diffusion of anti-gender discourse, highlighting its relationship with levels of endorsement in the Italian population and with different forms of political participation, and offering insights for further scholarly investigation and the development of targeted counter-strategies.

GSC12 Disinformation, Gendered Violence and Communicative Regimes

PP 1028 Misogyny and discursive toxicity in the context of illness content creation on TikTok and Instagram

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Misogyny online has been highlighted as a "serious cause for concern" (Ging and Siapera, 2019) with scholars emphasising its close entanglement with the affordances of social media platforms (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016; Ozkula et al., 2024). Despite much scholarly attention, whether and how misogynistic discourse shows up in the context of illness content on social media remains underexplored. Thinking of illness content as a potential home for misogynistic discourse may be surprising as social media is often highlighted as a supportive, therapeutic and safe space to share stories of illness (see Myrick et al., 2016; Kingod et al., 2017; La et al., 2019). Illness creators' content, though, includes high degrees of self exposure making it particularly vulnerable to cultural narratives of ableism (Tembeck, 2016), regimes of shame (Frohlich and Zmyslinski-Seelig, 2016; Philpot et al. 2022; Rademacher, 2018) and gendered notions of sexuality, responsibility, physical attractiveness and body propriety (Pitts, 2004; Authors, 2025). Therefore, we argue that these factors actually make illness content creators vulnerable to gender based hate online. Because of this, our paper asks whether and how misogyny is experienced in the context of illness content creation on Instagram and TikTok, paying particular attention to how this may be entangled with platform infrastructures such as algorithms and moderation policies.

To do this, we employ the concept of discursive toxicity (Recuero, 2024) to understand how misogynistic discourse, in an illness context, can be enabled by platforms resulting in 1) spread, 2) legitimisation and 3) harm. We draw on the case of two hereditary cancer syndromes: BReast CAncer (BRCA) and Lynch Syndrome, both genetic conditions which increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer (Cancer Research UK, 2025). Data was collected as part of a larger Leverhulme Trust funded project looking at experiences and understandings of hereditary cancer syndromes across social media platforms. For this paper, we draw on 29 semi-structured, online, interviews with English speaking hereditary cancer creators across two conditions (BRCA and Lynch Syndrome) and on two social media platforms (TikTok and Instagram). In addition to these interviews, our analysis also draws on observational field notes (on our interview participants' social media profiles and posts) and a qualitative content analysis of 'top' TikTok content (conducted as part of an earlier work package, see authors 2025).

Our paper contributes to existing knowledge by showing how misogyny manifests in the (somewhat surprising) context of illness content creation. Our findings show how misogyny in the illness context is entangled with virality and harm in the form of silencing women's voices in the health and illness space. Our findings build on literature that shows misogyny to be entangled with platform infrastructures (Recuero, 2024), yet we extend this by arguing that moderation practices are experienced as legitimising misogynistic discourse.

GSC12 Disinformation, Gendered Violence and Communicative Regimes

PP 1029 What happened?: A comparative analysis of news coverage of intimate partner femicides in quality newspapers in Spain and Belgium

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Introduction

This paper presents a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of newspaper articles reporting on intimate partner femicides (IPF) in Spain and Belgium between 2022 and 2024. While Spain has a long-standing tradition of acknowledging the killing of women by their partners or ex-partners as gender-based violence, and most Spanish press frame IPF as a structural, gender-based problem (Aldrete & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2023; Walker, 2022; Comas-d'Argemir, 2015; Berganza, 2003; López-Díez, 2002; Fagoaga, 1994; Fernández-Arribas & Noblejas, 2010; Carballido-González, 2009), Belgium only recognized femicide legally in 2023. No previous research has examined Flemish press coverage of such cases.

Aim

The aim of our study was to compare four quality newspapers—two in Spain and two in Belgium—reporting on IPF in terms of coverage rates, the use of tags and editor's notes, and the framing of cases: structural gendered frames on the one hand, or private non-gendered frames on the other.

Methodology

As illustrated by previous research a content analysis is a good methodological tool to analyse the representation of femicides in factual media content (e.g. Gius & Lalli, 2014; Rosa & Flores, 2020; Pröll & Magin, 2022). In total, the sample consisted of 392 articles extracted from El País and El Mundo in Spain, and De Standaard and De Morgen in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. We analysed the material using two major frames: the Structural Gendered Social Problem (SSP) frame and the Private/Isolated Non-Gendered Problem (PIP) frame.

Results

Our findings reveal stark contrasts: the Spanish newspapers in our sample reported up to 96% of documented intimate partner femicides and predominantly applied frames referring to IPF as a structural gendered problem, systematically tagging cases as gender-based violence (violencia de género/violencia machista) and providing helplines for victims. By contrast, Flemish newspapers covered up to 62.5% of IPF cases documented, and reporting relied heavily on frames referring to femicides as a private or isolated problem, often using terms such as "domestic violence" or "family drama", thereby relegating the problem to the private sphere rather than presenting it as a social problem with a gender dimension. These disparities suggest that Spanish journalism fosters (or is a consequence of) greater public recognition of femicide as a societal issue, whereas Flemish reporting risks depoliticizing and privatizing gender-based violence. Addressing this gap requires clearer editorial guidelines, the systematic inclusion of gender-based violence helplines in coverage, and appropriate training for (future) journalists.

GSC13 Influencers and Online Aesthetics

PP 1129 The occupation wives of TikTok: Tradwife aesthetics and the legitimisation of Israeli settler colonialism

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This presentation considers the emergent phenomenon of women content creators in the extreme settler movement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, in the context of escalating settler violence against Palestinians. We term these "occupation wives", and we argue that they must be understood as a conjuncturally specific iteration or mutation of the reactionary, white supremacist "tradwife" phenomenon associated with the MAGA movement in the US. We situate "occupation wives" in the broader context of online "mirror-worlds" (Klein 2024), political "confusionism" (Gidley 2025) and reactionary digital politics (Finlayson 2021, 2023). Increasingly, the reactionary right mirrors and absorbs ideas and discourses from the left, and the very notion of "feminism" is being appropriated, warped and rearticulated to serve reactionary political agendas. We closely analyse TikTok videos made by extreme settler women creators; these typically focus on women's domestic labour in the settlements, with an orientation towards "wholesome" and "relatable" content, and "demystifying" the settler movement through the offer of intimate glimpses into their daily lives. Through modalities of domesticity, care, motherhood, religion, and love for the land, the systemic violence against and dispossession of Palestinians is premised is rendered invisible.

We argue that the videos are characterised by the mimetic, topsy-turvy qualities of contemporary reactionary digital culture. In their aesthetic presentation and communicative style, they are substantially aligned with US tradwife content, with disorienting ideological mash-ups of "back to the land" pastoral aesthetics that exist alongside an embrace of digital media technologies. Like tradwives, they both embrace and reject feminism; while stating they are "not feminists" in some videos, they focus on showcasing the power of women in a conservative, male-dominated community in others (yet without challenging its heteropatriarchal values). They are thus part of a globally networked, resurgent new right appropriating left-wing and feminist discourse.

On the other hand, however, occupation wives are a highly conjuncturally specific phenomenon; whereas the term "tradwife" is routinely conflated with Anglo-American, white and Christian nationalist influencers, we argue that we must also look to its manifestations in other geo-cultural and racialised contexts. As such, our analysis of occupation wives is contextualised within longer histories of "femo-Zionism" in which women have long played a role in far-right Israeli politics and the active dispossession of Palestinians.

What is "new" about the occupation-wife phenomenon is its articulation through the celebrity logics of platform media, organised around concepts such as "authenticity" and "relatability". We use the term "strategic confusionism" to explain its simultaneous gesturing towards TikTok pop culture while supporting an extreme, violent settler colonialist project. Strategic confusionism offers a new way of thinking about the topsy-turvy logics of "reactionary feminism"; unlike Anglo-American examples, where it is often hard to pin down the politics of tradwives, here the stakes are obvious and high. We demonstrate how the hodgepodge of cuteness and violence, submissiveness and assertiveness, domestication and liberation found in their videos cleverly whitewashes the settler colonial project by creating an unintimidating brand in which influencers' performances of femininity serve as the ultimate proof of the project's innocuousness.

GSC13 Influencers and Online Aesthetics

PP 1130 Godfluencers: The christian influencers teaching followers to feel truth by materializing the devil and the divine

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This paper discusses how some female christian influencers are critically recontextualizing the notion of truth, asserting that truth equates God, biblical order, conservative morality, and traditional gender norms, while lies are equated with Satan, contemporary culture, feminism, and liberal politics. Using a theoretical framework based on material religion, affect, and post-truth, this study answers the question ". How do Christian influencers materially conceptualize truth and how do they use social media's affective affordances to teach followers how to distinguish "truth" from "lies"?", based on 11 months of digital ethnographic research on female social media influencers, including daily participant observation and archival work.

The theoretical approach considers religion as a deeply material practice, something that is felt, seen, and sensed in everyday life by believers (Hazard, 2013; Meyer, 2011; Morgan, 2016). In this context, media are crucial in organizing access to the divine, acting as anything that organizes access to the transcendental. On social media, emotions intensify as platforms amplify affect (Abdel-Fadil, 2019; Papacharissi, 2016). Influencers are also emerging as new kinds of digital religious authorities on social media (H. Campbell & Bellar, 2023). In a post-truth culture, subjective experiences and emotional appeals often outweigh objective facts, redefining how truth is understood in digital environments (H. A. Campbell, 2025; McIntyre, 2018).

The analysis reveals that Christian influencers materially conceptualize both the divine and the devilish influences through embodied storytelling and sensory cues. Through highly personal narratives, traditional gender roles are presented not only as a divine mandate but also as a solution to cultural anxieties. For example, joy in motherhood is positioned as proof that God's design is inherently fulfilling. The devil is materialized as a tangible force hiding in secular discourses, such as the feminist movement, or even in innocent content like Disney movies. Furthermore, modesty and purity become material practices that produce a specific affective state, such as the "Jesus glow," which is read as evidence of divine presence.

Ultimately, these influencers construct truth by leveraging the materiality of both God and Satan through embodied storytelling, sensory cues, emotional testimonies, and the interface logics of social media. Truth is framed as that which can only be achieved by following the word of God, and denying the lies of Satan. The influencers position themselves as both witness and teacher, modelling how followers should read their emotions and how to decipher 'real' truth from them. They collapse the boundary between spiritual warfare and cultural crisis, politicizing the personal and spiritualizing the political. Crucially, fear runs throughout these discourses as a central emotional force, presenting the devil as a tangible force at work in everyday life and facilitating the othering of outsiders. In this context, Truth is not argued. Truth is felt. This framing expands existing scholarship on material religion and digital religion by showing how the sensory, affective, and embodied dynamics of platforms actively shape what counts as truth.

GSC13 Influencers and Online Aesthetics

PP 1131 Waging war on feminism through jiaoqi discourse: Chinese tradwife influencers on Douyin

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Today, a 'tradwife' (traditional wife) aesthetic has gained traction across Euro-American societies. A tradwife comes into being through her repertoire of traditional 'white femininity'. The American '1950s housewife' is arguably the most representative archetype; still localized variants may be reshaped by such cultural markers as '"vintage" Victorian and homesteader' traditions in Australia and 'traditional "ethnic" dress' in Montenegro and the Netherlands. Yet, tradwife influencers do not merely embody an aesthetic but prophesy a discourse that romanticizes women's divine responsibilities as signifiers of white, middle-class, heteronormative traditions, associated with the West's past 'glories'. Mimicking their Euro-American tradwife counterparts, the *jiaoqi* aesthetic on the Chinese-language internet is adjacent to the imaginary of a young, beautiful wife who loves her husband devotedly. Being a *jiaoqi* anchors a woman's deference to male dominance specifically crafted under China's sociopolitical conditions. *Jiaoqi*-stylized submission to husbands does not assume an overtly racial form, nor does it draw on biblical teachings; instead, it underscores a perceived imperative for women to navigate a de facto male-dominated world by investing in their appeals within romantic contexts. Drawing on the concept of therapeutic governance, which interrogates the application of sociopsychological measures in population management, we examine how the *jiaoqi* imaginary contributes to a discursive apparatus shaped by China's neoliberal-style market economy under the party-state's political control. To this end, we adopt a sociocognitive approach, analysing the Douyin videos of a high-profile influencer who is dubbed '*jiaoqi*' by Chinese netizens. It is worth noting that *jiaoqi* influencers and *jiaoqi* discourse may function as parallel rather than allied forces. While *jiaoqi* influencers selectively draw on the aesthetic to build their social media presence, they may contextually downplay it to achieve specific personal agendas. Yet, focusing on an ideal-typical case, whose imaginary not only aligns principally with the aesthetic but also amplifies it as a trending issue on the Chinese-language internet, we probe into the dual politico-economic shape of *jiaoqi* discourse. We argue that this discourse commercially operates as a persona-building strategy within China's influencer economy. By prescribing sociopsychological self-help practices, *jiaoqi* influencers offer their followers counselling-style guidance on navigating home-work tensions. This content strategy reflects a pivotal axis of the influencer economy, where appealing to a broad heteronormative audience is key to success. Beneath this commercial logic, however, women's reconciliation with the status quo is explicitly glorified, rendering the discourse well aligned with a cooperative approach to systemic gender asymmetry that finds resonance in Chinese society. Amid the Chinese MeToo movement and related initiatives unfolding on social media, feminist debates are considered threats to regime stability. Adopting a cooperative posture, *jiaoqi* discourse responds to heightened intergender tensions by delegitimizing feminist struggles. In doing so, it has evolved into a grassroots ideological intervention that appears self-voluntarily aligned with the party-state's governing doctrines. Foregrounding the dual shape of *jiaoqi* discourse, the analysis underscores its sociopolitical significance within post-socialist China, where neoliberalism and authoritarianism weave a tangled web.

GSC13 Influencers and Online Aesthetics

PP 1132 "If a woman needs industrial tools to be satisfied, she's a slut" – Portrayals of sex and sexuality among Estonian manfluencers and spiritpreneurials

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There are different reasons and functions for people to be involved with the NoFap movement, refraining from masturbation, not all of them (such as kinks and fetishes) necessarily harmful (Burnett, 2021). However, many of these spaces carry misogynist, anti-LGBT, antisemitic, self-harm and pro-violence views supporting hegemonic masculinity (Dashiell & Rowland, 2024; Prause & Binnie, 2023), idealizing innate masculinity and the need for 'real sex' (Taylor & Jackson, 2018). This has created a space for creators without standardized credentials to provide interventions without scientific evidence (Kompatsiaris, 2025; Prause, 2023). Paradoxically, such "Reboot" or "Semen Retention" programs tend to cause more distress instead of decreasing it (Prause & Binnie, 2023).

This study focuses on the representations of sexuality and sexual activity among Estonian manfluencers and spiritpreneurials on TikTok and YouTube. Manfluencers are social media content creators who weaponize highly performative and extremist notions of masculinity (Wescott et al., 2024). Spiritpreneurials, on the other hand, privilege both entrepreneurialism and spiritual values for producing the ideal masculinity, while coaching audiences about male sexual energy (Kompatsiaris, 2024). Through a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the manfluencers' and spiritpreneurials' videos, we explore how they construct masculinity in the context of sexual identities and sexual behavior. Preliminary results indicate that manfluencers construct sexual abstinence and refraining from the use of pornography as a test of discipline and self-restraint necessary to conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Heterosexuality is presumed from audiences and the formation of sexual relations is highly based on 'sexual marketplace' ideals, where values are assigned to people based on physical as well as behavioral traits. At the same time, spiritpreneurials differ from manfluencers by framing relationships in an evolutionary mating context and emphasizing the need for love, security and connection. Sex is framed in the context of men as givers of pleasure to female partners, while appealing to differences in desire between men and women.

It is important to understand this type of content and how the ideas of various subgroups affiliated with the NoFap community relate to each other. Furthermore, the insights of this study can provide valuable insight into potential pipelines to the more discriminatory or extreme views that manfluencers and spiritpreneurials are associated with.

GSC13 Influencers and Online Aesthetics

PP 1133 "Why do women steal away men's joy?" – A qualitative content analysis of manfluencers (design) discourse of YouTube short content

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The rise of social media platforms facilitated both positive conversations and the host and spread of the manosphere- a digital ecosystem where "manfluencers" share misogynistic and toxic views. Prior research examined manosphere discourse in text-based forums and limited attention has been paid to how it is articulated in short video content (SVC), which exploit entertainment design phenomena to reinforce specific world-narratives, easily promoting engaging but toxic content, where manfluencers can strategically use SVC multimodalities to reach virality and maximize persuasion. This novel and powerful way to express toxicity deserves scholarly attention.

To investigate the characteristics of this content, this study deployed a qualitative content analysis via a Visual-Verbal Video Analysis (VVVA). SVC was selected from manfluencers' profiles, and their general, visual, multimodal, character, and compositional elements were analyzed via a six-steps iterative approach. Videos were stored in an extraction matrix, transcribed, and coded according to the aforementioned elements. The VVVA was chosen for two reasons: its flexibility, as its iterative approach allowed for codes and groups to be modified throughout data collection, in accordance with the exploratory nature of this research, and its ability to collect speech as well as multimodal element with relative ease of retrieval.

Findings revealed the presence of two overarching themes- and other multimodal design sub-phenomena characterizing manfluencers' content. One of these themes was the *win/lose theme*. In virtually all videos, manfluencers won the confrontation with their opponents. This was empowered by *editing* choices reinforcing manfluencers' views. For example, strategic *jump-cuts* showed opponents listening with a submissive demeanor, using *zooms* showing opponents left in disbelief, and *video-ending cuts* silencing the manfluencers' rivals, effectively censoring their rebuttals. Manfluencers edited themselves *reacting* to other creators' videos, reducing them to visual symbols and imagery to enhance their own persuasion via the use of self-disclosure and conversational tones, and engaged in *sketch-comedy,* persuading and winning against their "opponents" through the use of dramatic narrative tactics.

The second theme, *business-lingo,* had a high symbolic value. Manfluencers asked what others *bring to the table*, commodifying (romantic) relationships. They referred to *high-value* men and women, picturing men as *going out in the world* and "valuable" women having *raw, supportive femininity,* whose role is to be on *a man's side*.

Overall, this study shows how manfluencers strategically use SVC's multimodalities in synergy to share their values with the intent of persuading their audience of their views. Insofar, it made apparent how manfluencers do not only use speech, but also entertainment design phenomena as an attempt to persuade through discourse, and as such they should be considered as persuasive elements altogether.

HCO01 (Effects of) Representations of Health, Illness, and the Body

PP 0053 Academic perspectives on mental health representations in streaming fiction: an integrative review across communication and psychiatric research

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The growing centrality of television fiction – particularly content distributed through streaming platforms (Cardoso & Baldi, 2022; Grece, 2021; Nielsen, 2022) – has intensified scholarly attention to how mental disorders are represented in audiovisual narratives and how such representations may influence public understanding of mental health (Xia et al., 2022; Yeo & Silberg, 2021). Situated within the field of health communication, this study examines how mental disorders are conceptualised, evaluated, and problematised across academic research traditions, focusing on divergences and convergences between scholars from communication and audiovisual studies and those from psychiatric and mental health sciences.

Drawing on an integrative literature review approach (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005), this study synthesises academic articles and monographs published between 2013 and 2024 that address representations of mental disorders in television fiction. The integrative methodology enables the combination of heterogeneous theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and epistemological positions, allowing for a comparative reading of how mental health representations are framed across disciplinary boundaries. Rather than aggregating empirical effects, the review seeks to map dominant analytical concerns, evaluative criteria, and underlying assumptions within each research tradition, while identifying areas of overlap and tension, acknowledging the potential snowball effect that the investigation predicts (Dermeval et al., 2020).

The analysis is structured around three thematic axes. First, it contextualises television fiction within the broader transformation of audiovisual consumption, considering the technological, cultural, and industrial dynamics associated with contemporary streaming ecosystems. Second, it examines how mental health is framed within media scholarship and health-related research, including recurring discussions on stigma, normalisation, responsibility, and public knowledge (Grandón et al., 2021; Johnson, 2016; Lacerda & Santos, 2020; Miller, 2021; Ray & Hinnant, 2009; Tüysüz, 2020). Finally, the review focuses specifically on research addressing mental disorders in films and television series distributed via streaming platforms, such as Netflix, Prime Video, Disney+, and HBO Max (e.g., Katseanes, 2023; Peña & Sarrionandia, 2023), assessing what has been studied, what remains underexplored, and how disciplinary perspectives shape research agendas and interpretations.

Preliminary findings suggest that communication and audiovisual studies tend to emphasise narrative structures, representational patterns, audience interpretation, and cultural meaning-making (e.g., Wang et al., 2023), whereas psychiatric and mental health research more frequently foregrounds clinical accuracy, potential risks, and public health implications (e.g., Bridge et al., 2020; Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2019). While these perspectives are sometimes presented as conflicting, the review identifies emerging points of intersection that highlight the potential for interdisciplinary dialogue.

By systematically comparing academic insights across fields, this presentation contributes to health communication research by clarifying how disciplinary lenses shape understandings of mental health representation in television fiction and by outlining pathways for more integrated, ethically informed, and socially responsible research in an evolving media landscape.

HCO01 (Effects of) Representations of Health, Illness, and the Body

PP 0054 The body of body image research: A computational topic analysis (1980–2025)

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Body image (BI) research has historically been situated at the intersection of medicine, psychology, social, and media studies. After scholars have examined the conceptualizations, characteristics, and correlates of BI for several decades, we contend that a data-driven mapping of the field is both timely and necessary. By combining computational topic modeling with qualitative interpretation, the current study offers a longitudinal perspective on the evolving landscape of BI research.

We query the bibliometric open-source database OpenAlex (Priem et al., 2022) for English-language journal articles whose abstracts contain the keyword “body image” published between 1980 and 2025. After removing duplicates 51,846 articles remain. We focus on the social science and (media) psychology perspective and consequently filter the subfields accordingly, leading to a sample of 12,807 articles. To ascertain the development of the research field, we apply transformer-based topic modeling (BERTopic) to the abstracts of the retrieved articles and identify 113 topics. Afterwards, we qualitatively group these topics into 22 thematic clusters.

At the level of individual topics, the most prominent topic captures research on neuropsychological mechanisms in eating disorders, including information and emotion processing. Although the proportion of this research decreases over the years, the topic remains prevalent. Though initially among the most prominent topics, our data shows that research on

Rorschach tests and body boundaries effectively vanishes after the early 2000s. This reflects a broader shift away from psychoanalytical diagnostic approaches in psychology. Conversely, ethnicity- and culture-related BI research emerges in the early 1990s, aligning with a wider move toward context-sensitive psychological perspectives.

When shifting the focus from individual topics to the level of topic clusters, a different set of longer-term patterns becomes visible. The analysis indicates that research on cancer and its effects on BI remains a consistent focus. Research clustered around media, models, and advertising peaks around the turn of the millennium, which can be interpreted against the backdrop of the diet culture of the 1990s. According to our data, research explicitly addressing positive body image emerges only in the 2010s. During the same period, we observe a steady increase in social media-related research, even overtaking all others in terms of relative share in recent years.

We find that the field has diversified substantially, especially following the institutionalization of BI research in the early 2000s (e.g., the launch of dedicated journals; see Cash, 2004). Taken together, the results indicate a constitution of a dynamic field whose thematic priorities shift in dialogue with changing media environments, social norms, and medical-psychological discourses. Future analyses will address publication patterns within the field, including gender and geographical imbalances, the role of specific journals and the proportion of publications in top-tier outlets to not only describe, but further explain these trends.

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HCO01 (Effects of) Representations of Health, Illness, and the Body

PP 0055 The role of embodied and affective communication of children's pain and suffering in paediatric palliative care narratives

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In countries such as the United Kingdom, where paediatric palliative care partly relies on charitable donations, public broadcasting and online videos have become key tools for raising awareness and public support. These advocacy campaigns navigate a delicate balance: presenting the benefits of palliative care while depicting the tragic realities of dying children. In this paper, I examine the communicative functions of children's pain and suffering in these audiovisual narratives.

These representations are part of a historical continuum. Until the late 20th century, scientific theories assumed that children's immature nervous systems limited their pain experience, resulting in minimal pain treatment (Sisk et al. 2020). Consequently, early research on terminally ill children prioritised parental anxiety, with studies acknowledging children's experiences emerging only in the late 1970s and paediatric pain research gaining traction in the 1980s. Today, palliative care and pain management adopt holistic models that centre children's perceptions. In audiovisual campaigns, foregrounding children's experiences reflects this cultural shift, even as these representations continue to struggle with the long-standing denial of children's pain.

Using a multimodal analysis of documentary series *Beautiful Lives* (BBC, 2011), *The Hospice* (Together TV, 2018), and the online campaign *From That Moment* (Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, 2022–2025), I study how these projects seek to give visibility to paediatric care and to educate people about the necessity of addressing children's mortality. While these narratives often emphasize hospice staff's and parents' care efforts, contemporary representations also include children's voices to avoid trivialising their experiences. I draw on phenomenological pain theories (e.g., Bueno-Gómez 2017), where pain is not only symptomatic but a meaning-making process that includes efforts to make painful experiences understandable to others. The intersubjectivity of pain experiences allows the documentary materials to create affective and embodied connections between the suffering children and audiences.

Such engagement with children's pain is achieved through what Laura Marks (2000) calls "haptic visuality", which refers to aesthetic strategies like close-ups and off-kilter images that encourage viewers to feel rather than rationalise. I argue that these material and sensory elements are crucial for generating public support for paediatric palliative care. The inclusion of children's life stories alone provides meaning for paediatric palliative care, emphasising how personal and emotional storytelling functions as a persuasive form of health communication. However, I argue that scenes depicting suffering introduce an added layer of meaning where embodied and affective dimensions strengthen these messages. Through intersubjectivity, viewers respond to suffering holistically, transforming children's pain into a haptic experience that communicates urgency to alleviate their distress and, consequently, reinforces support for paediatric palliative care. With this paper, I aim to contribute to health communication scholarship by demonstrating how affectivity shapes public understanding and advocacy for paediatric palliative care.

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HCO01 (Effects of) Representations of Health, Illness, and the Body

PP 0056 More than a body? Insights into the impact of body positivity and body neutrality Instagram contents on female body appreciation and self-objectification

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Body image concerns have been identified as a global mental health issue, especially for women. Social media may contribute to this issue by cultivating narrow beauty and body ideals. At the same time, studies point out that body positivity content (which stresses the idea of loving one's body) disseminated through social media can increase body appreciation among female recipients. Still, due to their pronounced focus on the (female) body, these contents have also been shown to lead to higher self-objectification. This indicates an ambivalent impact of the body positivity movement on women's body image and raises the question of whether body neutrality (which emphasizes bodily functionality) might be more beneficial as a concept. However, contrary to expectations raised by activists and researchers, in a first online experiment, there were no differences between young female Instagram users' (N = 144, M = 21.6 years, high education) body appreciation and self-objectification after being exposed to either body positivity or body neutrality Instagram posts. Apparently, body neutrality posts do not necessarily address a common criticism of the body positivity movement—the strong emphasis on the body, frequently reinforced through the use of photographs of female bodies in both forms of social media posts.

Against this background, we chose to test the impact of the self-compassion messages typical for body positivity and neutrality contents in combination with different types of visuals (photographs of female bodies, illustrations of female bodies, body-neutral images) on female body appreciation and self-objectification. Since continuous Instagram use suggests repeated exposure to body-related contents, we are currently conducting a preregistered and ethically approved longitudinal online experiment (three days, three points of stimuli exposure, pre and post measurement of body appreciation and self-objectification). Preliminary analyses (mixed MANOVA, mixed ANOVA, further analyses) based on the current sample (n = 120, M = 24.1 years, high education) suggest that body appreciation has increased over time for participants who saw the self-compassion messages in combination with photographs (group 1) and illustrations of female bodies (group 2), but not for those in the control group (self-compassion messages combined with body-neutral images). No such effect was found for self-objectification.

While data collection for the second study is still ongoing, our findings so far underline the need for repeated exposures in experiments on effects of social media content, as well the critical impact of visuals on body image. More specifically, results of the second experiment indicate that repeated exposure to self-compassion messages, whether body positive or body neutral, can indeed enhance recipients' body appreciation—but only in combination with body-related imagery. However, it currently remains unclear if this goes hand in hand with detrimental effects regarding self-objectification. We hope to gather more insights into the complex interplay between social media contents, body appreciation, and self-objectification when we have reached the full sample size (N = 249 according to a g*power analysis).

(work in progress)

HCO01 (Effects of) Representations of Health, Illness, and the Body

PP 0057 The effects of masculine norms on the persuasiveness of humorous and neutral mental health messages for young men

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In Germany, depressive symptoms have increased substantially among young adult men in recent years, with 15.5% of men aged 18–29 affected, making them the most vulnerable male age group for potentially developing mental disorders. Moreover, traditional masculine norms have been identified as key factors in men's perception of barriers to the disclosure of mental distress, i.e., openly communicating emotional struggles, which is considered a positive coping mechanism for improving mental health. Promoting the disclosure of mental distress in young men, with the aim of breaking through these masculinized barriers, is therefore important; however, this can be difficult, as male audiences have been found to be particularly challenging to effectively address through health communication. Research indicates that utilizing targeted humor appeals may be particularly effective in addressing individuals with high masculine-norm conformity compared to neutral

appeals, yet empirical work on the persuasive effects of these message appeals in the context of young men's mental health remains scarce.

Guided by the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this study seeks to answer (RQ) how conformity to traditional masculine norms shapes young men's attitude formation toward mental distress disclosure following exposure to neutral versus humorous health messages. Specifically moderation of conformity to masculine norms on the relationship between health message appeals and psychological reactance is explored.

Methodologically, a randomized online experiment with a two-group pretest–posttest design was conducted via the platform SoSci Survey. Participants were men aged 18–35 who used social media at least weekly. In both conditions, participants viewed simulated Instagram feeds containing ten posts, including three about mental distress and seven filler posts. In condition one, the posts about mental distress displayed neutral visual appeals (stock images of young men), while in condition two the posts displayed humorous appeals (memes). Measurements included willingness to disclose distress, psychological reactance, elaboration and conformity to masculine norms. The study received ethical approval and was pre-registered before data collection commenced. An a priori power analysis was conducted prior to the start of the study which indicated a required sample size of $N = 278$. Data was collected from July to December 2025. After the exclusion of invalid cases, the final sample consisted of $N = 368$.

Results showed that, in line with previous research, conformity to traditional masculine norms significantly predicted higher psychological reactance toward health messages ($b = 0.60$, $p < .001$). Moreover, moderation analyses revealed a significant interaction between perceived humor and masculinity on elaboration ($b = 0.15$, $p = .021$). While perceived humor was generally positively correlated with elaboration, this interaction indicates that the positive association between perceived humor and elaboration was stronger at higher levels of masculinity.

Overall, the study contributes to a better understanding of how traditional masculine norms shape the persuasive effects of mental health communication among young men. The findings highlight the function of masculinized norms in complicating effective health communication towards this group. Results further suggest that well-matched humorous appeals may be particularly suited for addressing young men with high conformity to masculine norms to enhance their elaboration on mental health information.

HCO02 Actors and Users of Platformed Health Communication

PP 0162 'You are talking about something that a lot of us are feeling right now': Unity of emotional experiences and authenticity contract between audiences and non-expert YouTubers presenting mental well-being content

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Introduction

The problem of mental health and mental well-being has been increasing for the last few years (American Psychological Association, 2022; World Health Organization, 2022, 2025a, 2025b). Considering the global mental health crisis, the lack of sufficient support (World Health Organization, 2022, 2025b), and the increased use of YouTube as a source of information (Lam et al., 2017; Langford & Loeb, 2019; Harris et al., 2021; Oliphant, 2013), the authenticity of influencers takes on particular significance. YouTube viewers prefer to watch videos that do not appear very professional and contain personal narratives (Oliphant, 2013; Harris et al., 2021). In the digital economy and brand culture (Banet-Weiser, 2012), authenticity and self-commodification have become inherent and necessary attributes of personalized self-branding (e. g. Berryman & Kavka, 2018; Cunningham & Craig, 2017; Hund, 2023; Khamis et al., 2017; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Raun, 2018). Therefore, the aim of this research was to examine the authenticity of non-expert YouTubers presenting mental well-being content (how is performed and how is received by the followers).

Theoretical framework

The theoretical perspective of mediated authenticity by Gun Enli (2015) is adopted. According to Enli theory mediated communication is treated as a representation of reality and this *authenticity illusion* is possible thanks to the symbolic *authenticity contract* between the main stakeholders (producers, audience, regulatory authority). Regarding social media, these two crucial assumptions concern the pivotal role of the **audience** (Enli, 2015, p.91), which constantly ***negotiates the authenticity contract*** (Enli, 2015, p. 107) and contributes to defining the features of ***performed authenticity*** (Enli 2015, p. 111).

Method

Two popular YouTube influencers, who present mental well-being content, were chosen (Nathaniel Drew and Lana Blakely). The Enli proposition was pinpointed, developed, and restructured by S. Luebke in the analytically useful model (Luebke, 2021). He indicated four dimensions of authenticity: ***consistency, intimacy, ordinariness, immediacy***. Through qualitative and quantitative content analysis of 30 videos of each of these YouTubers (total 60 videos), four dimensions of authenticity of influencers (consistency, intimacy, ordinariness, immediacy) were characterized and compared with the result of the

thematic analysis of the viewers' comments (30 most popular comments below each videos: 30 comments x 30 videos x 2 YouTubers = 1800 comments)

Results

The key finding is that *intimacy*- a substantial feature of YouTubers' authenticity- is not established by describing experiences per se but by creating unity of experiences with their audiences through stories reflecting their followers' mental states. *Ordinariness* becomes less considerable, *immediacy* has the most minor significance. The viewers in the comments below the videos expand on the topics of the videos, express gratefulness, or reveal their experience of parasocial interaction. The examined channels appear to have a therapeutic effect. The audience's expectations of sharing similar emotional experiences are an inherent element of the construction of authenticity negotiation. Thus, the relevance of unity of emotional experiences indicates a new facet of authenticity negotiation in the social media environment. The research contributes to the knowledge about mental well-being-related content on YouTube in times of global mental health crisis.

HCO02 Actors and Users of Platformed Health Communication

PP 0163 Rethinking "health creators". Values and economies of creating first-person accounts of hereditary cancer on social media

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"Health creator" is now a common term across academic work (e.g., Avella, 2024) and public parlance. However, as a label, it directs our attention away from matters of *ill* health (e.g., of suffering, treatment), despite the number of users relying on social media to share first-person accounts of illness (e.g., on cancer, see Hodson J., O'Meara, 2023). As a concept, it remains underdeveloped – despite the growing body of research on creator cultures and platform economies of attention and visibility (e.g., Cunningham & Craig, 2021; Florida, 2022) and policy work on the influence of social media communication on lay understandings of health and medicine (e.g., Baker, 2025; Rubinelli, 2025; WHO, 2025).

To address this gap, we focus on hereditary cancer communication. Existing scholarship evidences the role of social media for carriers of hereditary cancer syndromes (Allen et al. 2020; Wellman et al. 2023; Authors, 2025) but overlooks how those sharing first-person accounts of these conditions, as *content creators*, are both exposed to and mobilise platform economies. We ask: How do hereditary cancer creators understand and mobilise values on social media?

We recruited 60 hereditary cancer creators via a preexisting social media dataset, our project social media, Facebook support groups and the newsletter of FORCE advocacy organisation. Interviews took place online between May 2024-February 2025, involving creators across mainstream platforms from five countries. We used prompts to solicit responses related to privacy, moderation and algorithms because of their relevance to platform economies and lived experiences of illness (privacy), gendered expectations and regimes of shame (moderation), and visibility (algorithms, moderation). We analysed data via inductive and deductive coding, with the latter drawing from work on platform imaginaries (Van Es & Poell, 2020) and cancer communication via legacy (e.g., Hawkins, 1999; Lorde, 2020[1980]; Sontag, 1991[1978]) and social media (e.g., Myrick et al., 2016; Pluta & Siuda, 2024; Stage et al., 2020).

Our findings point to three values central to the platform economy mobilised by these creators: of tailored community, controlled truth and modulated visibility. 1) These creators feel responsible towards adapting their content to circles of peers in specific online spaces. This resonates with "curating hope" for self and others (Hodson & O'Meara, 2023) but also discloses entanglements between lived experience of illness and situated knowledge of cultures and values of specific online spaces and communities. 2) Creators of visual content are committed to delivering "authentic" experience and downscaling "toxic positivity", those creating text-based posts focus more on correcting mis/disinformation, while all work towards countering hostile platform moderation (e.g., on nudity). 3) These creators are aware of the potential backlash of exposing personal content that is traditionally understood as private (e.g., pain), nonconventional (e.g., a flat female chest), or ugly (colorectal cancer) so they modulate their visibility based on expected harmful commentary.

Our findings evidence the importance of rethinking and expanding current understandings of "health creators" and further explore how those sharing first-person accounts of ill health develop- or redevelop- relationships and values within existing platforms economies.

HCO02 Actors and Users of Platformed Health Communication

PP 0164 Mere exposure effect of health-related social media content on perceived motivation

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Public debates frame social media as influential environments that make behaviour observable and thereby serving as an important source of motivational impulses and behavioural adoption (Livingstone et al., 2018; Orben, 2020). A substantial share of these social media content depicts everyday health behaviours such as physical activity, nutrition, and mental health. Adolescents, a key user group on these platforms, are still forming beliefs, values, and habits (van der Cruijsen et

al., 2023), raising the question of whether, and under which conditions, they perceive this content as motivating for their own behaviour.

Prior research shows that adolescents perceive health-related social media content (e.g. fitness posts) as motivating when it offers actionable advice, aligns with their own experiences or goals, and is reflectively engaged with (Easton et al., 2018; Frühauf et al., 2024). However, some health-related content primarily depicts behaviour rather than offering explicit guidance or calls to action. Through mere exposure effects (Zajonc, 1968), repeated content exposure may nevertheless increase familiarity, recognizability and desirability of practices. **RQ1** therefore tests the effect of exposure to health-related content on perceived motivation. Beyond that, perceived content-induced motivation is likely shaped by motivational dispositions such as willingness to self-improve, reflecting a general intention to engage with and act upon self-improvement cues (Zawadzka, 2014). Furthermore, social comparison orientation, the tendency to evaluate oneself in relation to others, may condition how strongly observed behaviour affects content-induced motivation (Pasko & Arigo, 2021). **RQ2** therefore asks: Does adolescents' willingness to self-improve and social comparison orientation moderate the association between exposure to health-related social media content and perceived motivational effects on health-related behaviours?

Based on cross-sectional data from 1,981 participants aged 14 to 21, recruited at schools, three health-related domains are compared: sports, nutrition, and mental health. Regression-based moderation analyses were conducted (PROCESS macro for R, v5.0, Model 2; Hayes, 2022). We control for perceived domain importance (sports, nutrition, and mental health), to account for baseline interest and intentions for self-improvement.

Across all domains, exposure to health-related content showed small but consistent positive main effects on perceived content-induced motivation (RQ1; sports: b = .10; nutrition: b = .06; mental health: b = .06). Willingness to self-improve showed stronger and equally robust effects across domains (b = .12–.18), whereas social comparison orientation showed no significant main effects in any model. Neither willingness to self-improve nor social comparison orientation influence the association between content exposure and perceived motivation (RQ2). Only in the nutrition domain a small moderating effect of willingness to self-improve was found to increase the effect of exposure on perceived motivation (b = .04, ΔR^2 = .003). Across all models, perceived importance of the respective life domain emerged as the strongest predictor (b = .25–.34).

Overall, these findings indicate that repeated exposure to health-related social media content is associated with increased perceived content-induced motivation while motivational dispositions play a negligible role in shaping this association. The presentation will discuss implications of these findings for future research and health prevention initiatives, particularly on social media.

HCO02 Actors and Users of Platformed Health Communication

PP 0165 Who tracks what, shares with whom, with what effects? Adolescents' digital health tracking

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Introduction

The quantification of health through wearable technologies such as smartwatches, sleep trackers, and smart rings has become an integral part of how individuals monitor and engage with their health, particularly among younger populations embedded in digital ecosystems (Lupton, 2021). These technologies translate subjective health experiences into measurable data and, when connected to social media platforms, enable monitoring, comparison, and sharing of health-related information (Chung et al., 2017; Goodings et al., 2024).

Within the m-health paradigm, digital health tracking is understood not only as tools for data collection but as health communication and behavior change environments that integrate social engagement and self-management processes (Silva et al., 2015). Thereby, health tracking practices can be understood as forms of self-surveillance, where the visibility of personal health data regulates behavior and fosters social conformity. Self-tracking technologies normalize datafied bodies and position health discipline as both a moral and social responsibility, reflecting broader societal norms (Millington, 2016). From a theoretical perspective, adolescents' digital health tracking can be seen as a mediated practice in which health data are produced, transmitted, and interpreted according to social norms and expectations (Lasswell, 1948). Following this paradigm, we investigate who (RQ1), tracks what kind of health data (RQ2), and shares them on which channel (RQ3), with whom (RQ4), with what effect (RQ5)?

Method

Adolescents were recruited through schools, and completed a quantitative online survey in a school lesson. Thereby, 1'786 adolescents between 14 and 18 years old (M_{age} = 15.65, SD_{age} = 1.08; 49% male) were surveyed. Participants reported their use of digital health tracking tools, and whether and how they shared tracked data on social media or specialized platforms.

Findings

78% of adolescents reported tracking health data. Among the health-trackers, there were slightly more females (55%), which can be accounted to a widespread tracking of the menstrual cycle (RQ1). Among those who did engage in health tracking (N = 1,389; RQ2), physical activity was the most commonly tracked (60%), followed by sleep (34%), nutrition (27%), physiological indicators such as heart rate (21%), and emotional well-being (19%). Among females, 63% reported tracking their menstrual cycle. Among the health-trackers (RQ3), 23% share their health data on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram), and 24% share it on specialized platforms (e.g., Strava). Among those who share health data (*N* = 711; RQ4), posts were predominantly visible to small audiences (77%), and to people they personally knew (76%). Concerning the effects (RQ5), the majority (77%) reported receiving feedback on health-tracking posts that was similar in frequency and valence to feedback received on other posts.

Discussion

This study examined adolescent digital health tracking and sharing through Lasswell's formula (1948) and the m-Health paradigm (Silva et al., 2015). The findings show that the phenomenon of quantifying-self has become a widespread health behavior among adolescents. These findings highlight digital health tracking as a socially structured, communicatively mediated practice. Through the next data collection with the same participants (Jan/Feb 2026), long-term effects of health tracking on particular health behaviors will be examined.

HCO02 Actors and Users of Platformed Health Communication

PP 0166 Online narratives and institutional communication during the West Nile virus outbreak in Italy, summer 2025

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Background

West Nile virus (WNV) is an endemic mosquito-borne infection in Italy, with recurrent summer outbreaks. In summer 2025, Italy experienced an increase in cases, accompanied by intense media coverage. In such contexts, institutional communication and online information ecosystems play a key role in shaping risk perception and adherence to preventive measures. This study aimed to identify communication gaps and derive practice-oriented recommendations for public health preparedness by analysing social media discussions and institutional social media communication on WNV in Italy during the peak of the 2025 outbreak.

Methods

We conducted a qualitative social media listening study covering 1 July-31 August 2025, within the Behavemod project (CUP I83C22001810007) and guided by the WHO-UNICEF Infodemic Insights Report framework. The study was designed to provide a rapid, practice-oriented understanding of the online information environment during an ongoing outbreak. Data were collected through Pulsar using a two-step keyword strategy to retrieve Italian-language content on arboviral diseases and specifically on WNV. Datasets of posts and news articles were exported for qualitative review; researchers documented recurring narratives, distorted or misleading claims, and user information needs. To include highly visual platforms, we applied an exploratory, content-centered sampling approach on TikTok and Instagram, starting from highly visible WNV-related videos and analysing associated posts and public comment threads. In parallel, we reviewed institutional social media communication at national (Ministry of Health and National Institute of Health), regional (Regione Lazio, Salute Lazio, and the President of the Region's public page), and municipal levels (Latina, Cisterna di Latina, Fondi, Priverno, and the Latina Local Health Authority), focusing on content, timing, engagement, and moderation practices. All data were publicly available and anonymised.

Results

Online discourse on WNV was largely informative and news-driven, focusing on surveillance updates, mosquito control interventions, and general preventive advice. Explicit conspiracy narratives were rare. More salient were critical and sceptical framings where users questioned the timing, coverage, and effectiveness of municipal disinfestation and expressed doubts about personal protective measures. Institutional communication showed a limited presence at national level, with most operational guidance effectively delegated to regional and municipal channels. In Lazio, a substantial share of communication flowed through political leadership pages rather than institutional profiles, with delays in explanatory messaging. At municipal level, communication centred on operational updates but varied in clarity, responsiveness, and moderation; where direct replies were provided, contention appeared more manageable. Across platforms, users requested practical, localised information, including street-level disinfestation details, symptom recognition, transmission routes, and the use of repellents in specific populations.

Conclusions

The 2025 WNV outbreak in Italy shows that a predominantly informative online environment may still expose vulnerabilities in institutional communication, particularly when operational messaging is fragmented across governance levels.

Based on the integrated analysis, the working group developed practice-oriented recommendations, including improving coordination across governance levels, preparing reusable and rapidly deployable communication materials, supporting local authorities through risk communication capacity building and moderation strategies, and systematically integrating social listening into outbreak preparedness. These measures may enhance timeliness, coherence, and public trust in the management of vector-borne disease outbreaks.

HCO03 AI, Datafication and the Future of Health Communication

PP 0494 Use and perceived (dis)advantages of AI tools for health issues

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Relevance & Research Questions

Answering health related questions often relies on a combination of interpersonal communication (with health professional, friends and families) and online information seeking (Reifegerste et al. 2020). Today, this triadic setting of health professionals, lay persons and online sources is supplemented by AI tools. Warnings about systematic biases, misleading information, counterfactual content, and hallucinated evidence do not seem to limit the adoption of these tools. Against this background of rapid diffusion, the public debate about risks and opportunities as well as individual user experiences, this study investigates today's health-related AI use and its perceived advantages and disadvantages. It focuses on adolescents, since they are in a critical developmental stage regarding health behaviours (Aira et al. 2021) and are more likely to be among the early adopters and heavy users of digital innovations (Stefan 2024). Beside presenting a theoretical framework for the impact of AI tools on the health information ecosystem, the study empirically investigates the following research questions:

RQ1: How prevalent is the use of AI tools among adolescents for answering health-related questions?
RQ2: What are the health topics AI is used for by adolescents?
RQ3: What are adolescents' perceived advantages and disadvantages of AI use for health issues?

Methods

Adolescents were recruited through schools and completed a quantitative online survey in a school lesson. Thereby, 1'468 adolescents between 14 and 18 years old (M_{age} = 15.57, SD_{age} = 1.05; 54% male) were asked about their use of AI tools for health-related questions. Participants reported the frequency of AI use for health-related questions and specific health issues (days per week, less frequent, or never). Furthermore, approval to various statements on advantages and disadvantages was assessed (1 = "completely false"; 5 = "completely true").

Findings

RQ1: 76% of the study participants indicated using AI to answer questions regarding health issues. To put this into perspective: almost all adolescents use AI for school related tasks (96%) and speak with their parents about health issues (92%) while 75% speak with medical professionals. RQ2: Among AI health users, almost all use it for questions regarding gender/gender identity (97.2%) and sexuality (92.6%) while nutrition (36.0%) and sports/fitness (35.8%) are the least queried health topics, further topics will be discussed in the presentation. RQ3: Given this clear topical focus on rather intimate topics, it may come with some surprise that the most important advantage of AI use is its availability at any time (M = 4.3; SD = 0.94) while the possibility to be more open with AI than with other conversational partners is of minor importance (M = 3.2; SD = 1.34). Perceived disadvantages of AI are that it does not know one's medical history (M = 3.9; SD = 1.26) and reservations regarding data protection (M = 3.8; SD = 1.23). Concerns about receiving incorrect information are rather limited (M = 3.1; SD = 1.01).

Discussion

The empirical findings demonstrate the importance to investigate health related AI use by adolescents with dedicated projects including topics that are important for their developmental stage. The perceived (dis)advantages by adolescents underline the importance of health and AI literacy to support its critical use within the context of additional sources.

HCO03 AI, Datafication and the Future of Health Communication

PP 0495 Defining trust in AI-generated health information: A systematic literature search and conceptual synthesis

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Generative AI systems (e.g., ChatGPT) are rapidly becoming routine information sources, including in health contexts. In this domain, trust is pivotal because it governs whether users rely on and act upon health information (Lu et al., 2018). At the same time, calibrating trust is uniquely challenging for AI-generated health information (AI-HI): generative systems may

produce convincing but incorrect or biased content, undermining informational reliability (Kordzadeh & Ghasemaghaei, 2022). Despite these risks, emerging evidence suggests that public trust in AI-HI in Europe is already moderate (**blinded).

While research is beginning to empirically tackle trust in AI-HI, its conceptualization remains unclear. Relevant insights are dispersed across two adjacent but largely separate research strands: (a) trust in online health information (OHI) and (b) trust in generative AI. Importantly, these strands often approach trust with different emphases and targets. OHI research frequently foregrounds credibility judgments and usefulness perceptions (Johnson et al., 2015), whereas AI trust research more often focuses on system properties such as opacity, explainability, and predictability (Rheu et al., 2021). Without systematically integrating these perspectives, health communication research risks relying on incompatible definitions and measures of trust in AI-HI.

To address this gap, we conduct a systematic two-strand literature search paired with a conceptual synthesis. On November 2nd 2025, we searched *Communication & Mass Media Complete*, *PubMed*, and the *ACM Digital Library* for peer-reviewed articles published since 2010, using two predefined strategies: (1) an OHI-focused search (title: trust* OR trustworth* OR credib*; abstract: "online health information" OR "digital health information" OR "internet health information" OR "eHealth"); and (2) a generative-AI-focused search (title: trust* OR trustworth* OR credib*; abstract: "artificial intelligence" OR "AI systems" OR chatbot* OR "conversational agent*" OR "large language model*" OR "generative AI").

The combined search yielded 181 records; after deduplication and other reasons (paper was not published yet), 179 remained (N_{OHI} = 30; N_{AI} = 149). During title/abstract screening, two coders assessed whether user trust and/or system trustworthiness constituted a central focus; approximately 50% of records were excluded at this stage, resulting in 90 papers for full-text eligibility assessment (N_{OHI} = 22; N_{AI} = 68).

Full-text screening will commence in January 2026, followed by structured data extraction (e.g., construct definitions, operationalizations, and antecedents/cues) and a conceptual synthesis integrating both strands. The synthesis will deliver (1) a domain-sensitive working definition of trust in AI-HI, (2) an integrative framework separating trust (behavioral willingness to rely) from trustworthiness (system/output properties), and (3) a set of core dimensions and cues to inform scale development and future health communication research on trust in the AI era. The review process will be completed in early summer 2026, enabling presentation of finalized results at ECREA 2026.

HCO03 AI, Datafication and the Future of Health Communication

PP 0496 Beyond the algorithm: Public perceptions of AI use in healthcare decision-making

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly integrated into healthcare to support diagnostics, decision-making, and administrative processes, offering potential gains in efficiency, accuracy, and health communication. However, the successful implementation of AI depends not only on technical performance but also on public perceptions of its helpfulness, riskiness, and fairness. These perceptions shape whether AI is viewed as beneficial and equitable or as error-prone and lacking human oversight, and are therefore critical for guiding responsible integration. Understanding these views can help to develop communication strategies that emphasize AI's supportive role while addressing public concerns. This study examines public perceptions of automated decision-making (ADM) in healthcare and investigates how these perceptions relate to potential contextual factors, based on literature, by using structural equation modeling.

Methods

Data were drawn from the first wave of an ongoing six-wave longitudinal survey panel. The final analytic sample consisted of 3,915 respondents (mean age 52.1 years; 52.1% female). Structural equation modelling (SEM) was conducted in AMOS 29. Perceptions of ADM in healthcare as *helpful*, *risky*, and *fair* (1 item) served as endogenous variables, while the contextual factors AI literacy (5 items), familiarity with different forms of AI (5 items), confidence in clinicians' ability to distinguish AI- from human-generated content (1 item), use of conversational agents for health information (1 item), and use of traditional digital health information sources (4 items) were included as exogenous variables (each measured on a 7-point Likert scale). Model fit was assessed using χ^2, RMSEA, and CFI, and improved based on modification indices. The final model demonstrated acceptable fit (RMSEA = .074; CFI = .911).

Results

Perceptions of ADM in healthcare varied systematically with AI-related experience and information practices. Perceived *helpfulness* of ADM was positively associated with familiarity with different forms of AI and confidence that clinicians can distinguish AI-generated from human-generated content, and-to a lower extend- AI literacy and use of conversational agents for health information. Perceived *riskiness* showed a more nuanced pattern: use of conversational agents was associated with lower perceived risk, whereas greater familiarity with AI and greater reliance on traditional health information sources were associated with higher perceived risk. Perceptions of ADM as *fair* were most strongly predicted by confidence in clinicians' ability to differentiate AI- versus human-generated content, with additional small positive associations for AI familiarity, AI

literacy, and use of conversational agents. Overall, familiarity with AI and trust in clinicians' oversight emerged as key factors shaping public evaluations of ADM in healthcare.

Discussion

Public perceptions of ADM in healthcare are shaped by technological familiarity, use of conversational agents, and confidence in human oversight. ADM is more likely to be perceived as helpful and fair among individuals with greater familiarity with AI, higher AI literacy, and, most importantly, confidence in clinicians' ability to critically interpret and manage algorithmic outputs. At the same time, increased familiarity with AI may heighten awareness of potential risks. Overall, perceptions of ADM's helpfulness and fairness depend more on trust in healthcare professionals and clear communication about AI's role than on trust in the technology itself.

HCO03 AI, Datafication and the Future of Health Communication

PP 0497 When first-person deepfakes threaten health agency: Health self-efficacy and resistance-oriented processing of AI-generated narratives

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As deepfakes are increasingly adopted in health communication to enhance personalization and relevance (Clarke et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2025), they are often assumed to foster engagement and persuasion. Prior research on narrative perspective suggests that first-person framing increases self-relevance and immersion (e.g., Nan et al., 2017; Ratan & Dawson, 2016). In the context of deepfakes, however, first-person perspective carries added significance because it does not merely frame messages as personally relevant but presents them as if originating from the self. By allowing synthetic media to speak from the viewer's apparent standpoint, first-person deepfakes may blur the distinction between personal health judgments and externally provided guidance, raising concerns about perceived agency and control. Yet little is known about when such first-person deepfake messages elicit resistance.

Drawing on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) and psychological reactance theory (Dillard & Shen, 2005), this study examines how first-person deepfake health narratives shape affective and cognitive responses as a function of individuals' health-related self-efficacy. Health-related self-efficacy reflects the perceived ability to understand and regulate health-related decisions (Bandura, 1997). From this perspective, self-efficacy functions as a psychological resource that supports individuals' sense of agency over health-related decision-making. Individuals with higher health self-efficacy are therefore more likely to view health-related judgment as a domain of personal control. When health deepfakes adopt a first-person voice, they are more likely to be experienced as speaking *from* the self rather than merely *about* the self, thereby repositioning the apparent source of judgment from an external advisor to the self. For individuals with higher health self-efficacy, this source ambiguity is more likely to be experienced as an intrusion into personal health agency, triggering resistance-oriented responses.

To address this issue, we conducted a laboratory experiment (N = 210) using a mixed design in which participants viewed two AI-generated deepfake health narratives presented in first-person and third-person perspectives, with presentation order randomized. Health-related self-efficacy was measured at pretest and examined as a moderator. After each exposure, participants reported affective resistance, uncanny valley responses, and psychological distance to capture resistance-oriented reactions. Results showed that first-person deepfakes elicited greater affective resistance than third-person messages. Crucially, this effect was moderated by health-related self-efficacy: participants with higher self-efficacy experienced stronger resistance and greater psychological distancing when exposed to first-person deepfakes, indicating heightened sensitivity to perceived intrusion into personal health agency. These responses were also characterized by stronger uncanny reactions, further supporting a resistance-oriented pattern of processing.

By integrating social cognitive theory with psychological reactance theory, this study incorporates perspective-taking into research on synthetic media to examine resistance-oriented processing in AI-mediated health communication. The findings demonstrate that first-person personalization in deepfakes does not uniformly empower users and may instead undermine perceived agency, particularly among individuals with high health self-efficacy. Practically, the results caution against the uncritical use of first-person framing in AI-generated health messages and highlight the importance of aligning AI design with users' expectations of agency and autonomy.

HCO03 AI, Datafication and the Future of Health Communication

PP 0498 Digital health in practice: A multi-stakeholder survey on organisational roles and responsibilities

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Digital health technologies increasingly rely on forms of collaborative responsibility that cut across patients, healthcare professionals, organisations, and policy actors. In the field of mobile health (mHealth)–based self-management, communicative processes within and between organisations play a central role in shaping how responsibilities are distributed,

legitimised, and coordinated. Yet despite the growing relevance of organisational and networked health communication in times of technological and institutional change, empirical research continues to privilege individual-level effects, leaving cross-sectoral organisational perspectives under-theorised and rarely compared.

Addressing this gap, this study examines how organisational actors across societal sectors interpret their roles, responsibilities, and communicative practices in the context of digital health technologies that promote patient self-management. Drawing on preliminary results from an ongoing cross-sector survey (N = 230) of governmental bodies, health insurers, private businesses, research institutions, interest groups, and civil society organisations in Germany, the analysis investigates perceived responsibilities, value judgements, organisational impacts, readiness for engagement, and positioning within interorganisational networks. The study adopts a health communication perspective that foregrounds normative expectations, trust, and coordination across organisational boundaries in digital contexts.

First results reveal pronounced sectoral differences in responsibility attributions. While some civil society and non-governmental actors acknowledge shared responsibility, the strongest responsibility for mHealth success is attributed to individual users themselves (mean rank = 2.44), followed by healthcare professionals (3.00) and health insurers (3.01). In contrast, governmental actors (4.12), developers and pharmaceutical companies (4.68), research institutions (5.18), and NGOs (5.82) are perceived as comparatively less responsible. This pattern points to a communicative individualisation of responsibility, in which accountability for digital health outcomes is shifted towards patients and frontline professionals, while formal organisational and policy actors remain weakly positioned.

These findings highlight potential gaps in cross-sectoral coordination, normative alignment, and collaborative governance in digital health. The findings suggest that efforts to strengthen collaborative responsibility may be particularly important in bridging the divide between individual and organisational roles, ensuring that digital health technologies achieve their intended impact across societal contexts.

HCO04 Health Information Behaviors and Informational Inequality

PP 0606 Online health activities remain socially and economically stratified: Evidence from the German Microcensus

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Online health information-seeking behaviors (HISB) are essential for modern health communication (https://doi.org/10/gm7v23). Digital services are promising for enhancing interactions with the healthcare system (https://doi.org/10.2196/44024). While earlier work found digital divides even within affluent societies (https://doi.org/10/g5qmt4), demographic and socioeconomic factors became less predictive in more recent studies (https://doi.org/10/gtg7gv; https://doi.org/10/gqx5tf). The conceptual relevance of sociodemographic factors within theoretical frameworks of HISB remains debated (https://doi.org/10/dg36th). Recent studies have relied on online surveys and self-selected participant pools. Evidence on the general population of Internet users from high-quality samples remains sparse. In response, we answer the research questions:

RQ1: How prevalent is online HISB and online booking of medical appointments among Internet users in Germany?
RQ2: How do the prevalences differ by demographic and socioeconomic factors?

Methods

The *Survey on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Usage in Households and by Individuals* is part of the German Microcensus 2022. The population comprises all persons in Germany who have the right of residence. A 1% sample is randomly selected from official registries. The ICT survey is administered to a random 4% subsample of participants aged 16–75 years who have used the Internet in the last three months. Participants reported whether they used the Internet during this period for 1) online HISB and 2) making medical appointments, in addition to various sociodemographic characteristics included in the Microcensus: https://www.gesis.org/en/missy.

We analyzed the scientific use file released in 2025. First, we predicted the health-related online behaviors by each factor alone to estimate bivariate relationships and prevalences within the subpopulations. Second, we included all predictors to estimate the unique contribution of each factor.

Results

41.3% (95% CI [40.3, 42.3]) of the population engaged in online HISB. 21.1 % (95% CI [20.3, 21.9]) booked a medical appointment online. We found small but meaningful associations with sociodemographic characteristics. *Education* explained 2.6% and 3.5% of variance, with substantial unique contributions. Higher education was associated with higher prevalences. Consistent with the literature, we found differences by *age* (lower prevalence in older groups, with the exception of 16–20-year-olds), *gender* (higher prevalence among women), *migration background* (lower prevalence), and *income* (higher prevalence in higher-income groups). Further household-related factors, such as *household size* and the *presence of children*, were not important. The results for *health problems* indicated suppression effects. Individuals

with health problems would be even more likely to use the Internet for health-related purposes, but their problems prevent them from realizing this potential.

We provided valuable reference data on the prevalence of online behaviors central to the field of health communication. The results will be discussed in the context of stratified health-related Internet use and its implications for health disparities.

HCO04 Health Information Behaviors and Informational Inequality

PP 0607 Person and situation profiles of health information behaviors and their emotional consequences: Applying multilevel latent class analyses

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Introduction

Throughout the patient journey, individuals engage in various information behaviors to build adequate understanding, manage uncertainty, and navigate emotional burden (Brashers, 2001). While prior research has provided rich descriptions of seeking, scanning, and avoidance in isolation, today's high-choice information environment requires considering complex patterns of information management. Therefore, this study is guided by the information repertoire approach, which captures the ways in which information behaviors are combined (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006). Supplementing repertoire studies that focus primarily on person-level types of source combinations (e.g., Fisse et al., 2024), the current study integrates strategies, sources, and issues and acknowledges that information behaviors vary across individuals and situations. Accordingly, the study examines situation- and person-level profiles (RQ1a/b) characterizing information repertoires.

Information repertoires also provide explanatory power for health outcomes. The relevance of emotion regulation for navigating health challenges (Savolainen, 2015) justifies examining how information repertoires relate to shifts in discrete emotions. Based on distinct appraisal patterns of emotions as outlined in cognitive appraisal theories (Lazarus, 1991), this study examines shifts in anxiety, worry, anger, and hope. Thus, RQ2a-d asks how the identified repertoires can be characterized by changes in anxiety, worry, anger and hope.

Methods

Data were collected using an experience sampling method (ESM) combined with pre- and post-questionnaires. The sample (N = 504 individuals, N = 17,674 experience sampling forms (ESF)) consists of individuals who reported currently experiencing acute or chronic health challenges recruited via a German commercial online access panel. The ESM captured 3 random episodes of health information behaviors per day over a period of 14 days. In each ESF, a multi-choice item assessed which strategies occurred since the previous ESF. If a strategy occurred, further questions addressed sources and issues. The pre- and post-survey were conducted immediately before/after the ESM phase. In both studies, the discrete emotions were captured by established three-item measures of high internal consistency.

For answering RQ1, multilevel latent class analysis (MLCA) was performed to identify classes at both the situation- and person-level. For RQ2a-d, a mixed ANOVA was computed to test the significant interactions between time (pre-/post-survey) and information repertoires on changes in emotions.

Results and Discussion

The MLCA yielded a six-class solution at both the situation- and person-levels. Situational profiles were dominated by a single strategy. Seeking-related profiles varied along the patient journey, ranging from "active symptom checking", "disease-specific verification" to "therapy-oriented information seeking". Scanning-based profiles covered "symptom monitoring" and "monitoring of disease progression, treatments, and healthcare". Avoidance occurred in relation to symptoms, disease-specific, and general health information.

At the person level, content-related orientations structured information repertoires. Seeking- and scanning-related situations referring to similar issues were particularly likely to co-occur, as reflected in the profiles of "symptom checkers", "disease monitors", and "healthcare-engaged individuals". The mixed ANOVA (RQ2a-d) revealed no significant interaction effects, indicating that changes in emotional experiences over time did not differ by repertoire type.

Overall, the findings highlight the situational variability and multidimensionality of information behaviors and underscore the value of repertoire-based, context-sensitive approaches in health communication research.

HCO04 Health Information Behaviors and Informational Inequality

PP 0608 How health literacy influences health outcomes through information processing: A cross-sectional study of heart failure patients

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Background

Effective self-management, like physical activity or medication adherence, is central for patients with heart failure (e.g. Chen et al., 2017). To support these behaviors depends on whether the patients acquire and how they process health information on their disease (e.g. Kontos & Viswanath, 2011). Guided by the Integrative Model of eHealth Use (IMeHU) (Bodie & Dutta, 2008), we aim to examine how different modes of information processing contribute to health outcomes. The model assumes that health literacy (HL) is positively related to the reception and processing of health-related information, which in turn affect various outcomes. Building on this, we assume that HL positively affects objective knowledge, subjective knowledge gain, perceived benefits, empowerment, autonomy, and planned behavior. Shedding light on certain modes of information processing, we further hypothesize that cognitive involvement, thematic interest, enjoyment, and ease of cognitive access mediate the aforementioned relationships. Based on Unimodel (Kruglanski & Thompson, 1999), we assume that these modes of processing can vary in intensity during information processing.

Method

We conducted an online survey with 208 German heart failure-patients (age: $M = 64.0$, $SD = 11.6$; 32.7 % female, education: 45.2 % high, 37.5 % medium, 16.8 % low), recruited via a German Online Access Panel. We assessed HL (Kolpatzik & Zok, 2017) prior to showing a video on physical activity in heart failure. Afterward, we measured patients' enjoyment, cognitive involvement, thematic interest, ease of cognitive access (Appel et al., 2002) and health-related outcomes (objective and subjective knowledge, perceived benefits, autonomy, empowerment, and planned behavior; Acuña Mora et al., 2018, Kahlor, 2010; Williams et al., 1996; Wu et al., 2020) using adapted established scales. Sociodemographics and selected pre-measures were included as covariates.

Results

The explained variance of the models ranged between 47.1% (empowerment) and 70.7% (perceived benefits). HL was significantly associated with perceived autonomy ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$), empowerment ($\beta = .44$, $p < .001$), and planned behavior ($\beta = .31$, $p < .01$). Regarding the hypothesized mediation effects, the association with perceived autonomy was fully mediated by enjoyment ($ab = .048$, 95%-CI[.003, .112]) and thematic interest ($ab = .083$, 95%-CI[.015, .172]). The effect on empowerment was partially mediated by ease of cognitive access ($ab = .099$, 95%-CI[.023, .186]). Further, the effect on planned behavior was fully mediated by thematic interest ($ab = .125$, 95%-CI[.029, .241]). In addition, HL also indirectly affected perceived benefits via ease of cognitive access ($ab = .109$, 95% CI [.051, .178]). Cognitive involvement was not a mediator, and no effects were found for objective knowledge or subjective knowledge gain.

Discussion

The study revealed in line with the IMeHU that health literacy serves as a key antecedent of the processing of health information, facilitating thematic interest, enjoyment, and ease of cognitive access. The most relevant mechanisms were thematic interest and ease of cognitive access. Overall, the findings highlight the need for relevant, engaging, and cognitively accessible information.

HCO04 Health Information Behaviors and Informational Inequality

PP 0609 For many, but not for all. Vaccine information among hesitant or misinformed citizens in Italy

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Introduction

This contribution explores the complexity of vaccine hesitancy, as a constellation of dynamic, opaque, and occasionally inconsistent attitudes, not a simple ideological opposition. The increasing centrality of immunization programs in several Countries has generated a highly polarized debate between adherent and hesitant people, in particular during and after Covid-19 pandemic, often creating contrasts and clashes between supporters and skeptics, shaping both public and scientific debate, as well as media representations.

The research and the RQs. The study is part of the TARAVH (Transdisciplinary Action Research Against Vaccine Hesitancy) project, led by sociologists of communication, social psychologists and physicians with an interdisciplinary and analytical approach. Although part of a wider research activity, in this contribution we would like to focus the attention on the relationship between vaccination behavior and health information attitudes among the population. How do people usually

inform about vaccination? Are they aware of their "vaccination biography"? Which are the perceived obstacles in their informative behaviors on health and, particularly, on vaccines?

Methodology and the sample. An integrated design is adopted, combining a systematic international literature review with a national sample survey. The review phase, conducted from April and June 2023 via the Scopus database, analyzed the state of the art in vaccine communication over the last decade, selecting 114 scientific articles published within sociological and multidisciplinary frameworks, in order to detect, the prevailing narrative frames, the definitions and the roles of "hesitancy" within these informative scenarios. Concurrently, in February 2025, empirical research was conducted on a representative sample of 1000 Italian citizens, with a mixed-method CATI-CAWI in order to maximize response rates and mitigate selection bias. The survey was structured with validated psychometric scales to measure awareness, hesitancy, and the perception of information sources.

The findings. The findings highlight a critical gap in the capacity for autonomous evaluation of health contents delivered outside of direct interactions with professionals, with specific difficulties in making decisions based on online research or media sources. A problematic landscape of "health literacy" emerges: nearly half of the respondents reported never having come into contact with informational materials regarding vaccination campaigns, signaling a fracture in the penetration of institutional messaging. Among those who did access such materials, 31.8% encountered terminological barriers and 27.2% found the texts difficult to understand, underscoring the persistence of inaccessible technical language. As the analysis shows, educational attainment is the most decisive variable in the perception of informational difficulties, with peak criticality recorded among those with only a primary school education. Furthermore, an association is observed between uncertainty regarding one's own vaccination status and high scores of perceived difficulty, suggesting that a lack of personal health memory is associated with greater fragility in navigating the preventive healthcare system. Overall, individuals with the greatest difficulty in managing health information are characterized by low educational levels, limited exposure to news or other informative contents about health related issues and low awareness of their vaccination status. In specific prevention areas, meaningful differences between males and females seem to emerge.

HCO04 Health Information Behaviors and Informational Inequality

PP 0610 Information marginalization and crisis communication: How underserved publics in the Netherlands navigate health information during a health crisis

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Health crises intensify the public's need for reliable and actionable information, what can further expose and deepen existing information inequalities. Therefore, effective health communication must ensure understandability and equitable access across diverse social groups, yet many individuals remain systematically limited in their ability to obtain, interpret, or trust vital health information. These dynamics were visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when underserved groups faced heightened information needs, together with persistent barriers to accessing trustworthy content.

Despite the recognized importance of audience perspectives, crisis communication research has largely focused on institutional production and dissemination of messages rather than on the lived experiences of marginalized publics and their actual information practices and preferences. This study investigates how underserved groups who experience difficulties in accessing or making sense of public health information navigate communication during a health crisis. We define underserved groups as those affected by low institutional trust, low literacy, or low socioeconomic status, each corresponding to distinct barriers related to skepticism toward institutional messaging, comprehension, and access to communication channels.

To address this gap, the study adopts a publics-centered approach using a mixed-method design. Four focus groups (N = 32) with participants from underserved backgrounds explored experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, preferred modes of receiving information, and perceived barriers to comprehension and access. Insights from these discussions informed the development of an accessible, in-person survey administered to 1,059 participants, each screened to belong to at least one target group. Questions addressed usage, trustworthiness, comprehensibility and accessibility of different sources, formats and channels during the pandemic.

The findings revealed a diversity of communication choices, although some specific patterns can be highlighted. Interpersonal and community-based communicators (such as family, friends, and local contacts) emerged as frequently used and trusted sources, while healthcare professionals and scientific experts were rated as most trustworthy overall. Notably, governmental institutions and mainstream news media were widely used despite comparatively lower trust.

In terms of format preferences, participants favored in-person conversations and short, visually guided explanations, pointing to the importance of clear and straightforward communication formats. Television and online news were the most commonly used channels.

These findings demonstrate that while mainstream communication remains central during health crises, closer interpersonal sources play a crucial intermediary role, something that aligns with previous literature on information intermediation. Thus,

future strategies to achieve effective and inclusive communication during a crisis should ensure that close interpersonal communication can be used to convey information from mainstream or expert sources in a reliable and comprehensible way to underserved groups. This does not only enhance trust, but also allows an interactive type of communication, in which follow-up questions can be answered, clarifying potential doubts or concerns in a safe and reliable manner.

In total, by foregrounding the perspectives of historically overlooked publics, this study contributes to health and crisis communication research and highlights how source, format, and channel preferences intersect with different dimensions of vulnerability.

HCO05 Health Communication in Clinical and Care Contexts

PP 0717 Empowered, but not necessary health literate? Examining patient types, the role of online health information seeking behaviour and aspects of doctor-patient interaction

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This study builds on prior research on the nonlinear relationship between individual empowerment and digital health literacy (Author, 2024). While high digital health literacy is often assumed to foster empowerment, limited research critically challenges this assumption (Schulz & Nakamoto, 2013; Palumbo, 2017; Schulz & Nakamoto, 2022). Evidence suggests that individuals may be empowered despite low digital health literacy, while higher literacy does not necessarily lead to empowerment. For example, some highly digital health-literate individuals may prefer a dependent role in decision-making (Gellerstedt et al., 2022). In addition, doctor–patient communication may fail to accommodate patients' needs for empowerment (Timmermans, 2020), while structural barriers such as limited service access may further constrain empowerment. The widespread availability of online health information, often of uneven quality (Battineni et al., 2020), also raises concerns about "bad health literacy," where misinformation fosters false sense of empowerment, i.e. dysfunctional empowerment, or even disempowerment (Schulz & Nakamoto, 2011; Petrič et al., 2017). A key framework is Schulz and Nakamoto's (2013) model, distinguishing four patient profiles based on levels of health literacy and empowerment: high-need patients, needlessly dependent patients, dangerous self-managers, and effective self-managers. Despite its theoretical value, empirical validation and investigation of these profiles remains limited.

Building on this model, the present study aims to empirically identify patient types based on digital health literacy and empowerment and examine their sociodemographic and health-related characteristics. Extending prior findings (Author, 2024), the study specifically investigates differences between patient types in terms of illness intrusiveness and chronic conditions (comparing individuals with intrusive chronic conditions to those in remission or without chronic illness), online health information-seeking behaviour, and perceptions of the doctor–patient relationship and patients' roles within it.

Data were collected with online survey administered via the Valicon online survey panel. The study used a quasi-representative quota sample of Slovenian adults aged 18–74 years (n = 1,713). The data will be analysed using cluster analysis to identify patient typologies. Bivariate analyses and multinomial regression will be conducted to examine differences among patient types in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, health-related factors, online health information seeking behaviour, and perceptions of doctor-patient interactions.

Preliminary findings indicate distinct patient types consistent with Schulz and Nakamoto's (2013) model. The analysis highlights illness intrusiveness as one of the key factors differentiating these groups. High-need and needlessly dependent patients are more likely to have a chronic condition, with high-need patients more frequently report recently diagnosed conditions with greater intrusiveness in their everyday life, contributing to their lower empowerment and digital health literacy. Patient groups also differ in their online health information-seeking behaviour, where the purpose for seeking online health information (lifestyle interests, curiosity vs. serious health issues) plays an important role. Dangerous self-managers exhibit tendencies toward dysfunctional empowerment, frequently misinterpreting online health information and exhibiting greater scepticism toward their doctors and prefer making health decisions independently, in contrast to other patient types.

The study's findings offer valuable insights for healthcare professionals by identifying distinct patient types and supporting the development of tailored, patient-centred interventions and refining communication strategies to better accommodate diverse patients' needs.

HCO05 Health Communication in Clinical and Care Contexts

PP 0718 Improving diabetes care pathways: From diagnosis to participation in health promotion activities for patients with type 2 diabetes on primary health care level in Slovenia

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Health services across primary, secondary, and tertiary care are commonly organised through planned patient pathways that specify what care is delivered, by whom, when and where (Gualandi et al., 2021), including both clinical processes

and supporting activities such as scheduling, communication, and patient guidance (Kinsman et al., 2010; Vesinurm et al., 2024). Health communication is central to the uptake and effectiveness of preventive programmes (Schiavo, 2014), yet it is often insufficiently examined as an integral component of service delivery. Analysing how communication is embedded in pathways is therefore essential for understanding how policy intentions translate into patients' lived journeys through care (Ben. Tovim et al., 2008; Lam, 2018; Liu et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024).

This study draws on data collected within the Joint Action on Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes (JACARDI). Within JACARDI, our work pursues two objectives: (1) to strengthen type 2 diabetes (T2D) care pathways, from diagnosis to participation in health promotion and education activities; and (2) to develop tailored communication interventions with specific focus on marginalised groups in Slovenia, including immigrant communities from former Yugoslavia and the Roma population. By examining how patients are directed into, and supported through preventive and educational services, the study contributes to efforts to build a more equitable and responsive primary health care system, with particular attention to those who face the greatest structural and individual barriers to health care.

We will present the design and preliminary findings of a qualitative study that examines divergences between the intended care pathways and the pathways as experienced in practice by health professionals. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (n = 22) conducted in two pilot settings with general practitioners, nurses in primary health care teams, clinicians working in clinics for patients without a designated GP, and educators in health promotion centres.

Findings indicate multiple barriers affecting pathway implementation and patient engagement, grouped into seven categories: (1) fragmentation and variability in the patient pathway; (2) coordination gaps and weak feedback mechanisms; (3) inconsistent knowledge of protocols and services; (4) capacity constraints and compensatory coping practices; (5) uneven access to, and quality of patient information and educational materials, alongside a need for standardisation; (6) limited use of digital guidance and gaps in digital content; and (7) constraints of tailoring support to patients' needs (e.g. language, hearing, motivation) due to time and organisational limitations.

These insights inform ongoing work on pathway improvement and intervention development, and contribute to debates on how primary care resources and communication practices can be organised to better support equitable participation in prevention and health promotion among patients with T2D.

HCO05 Health Communication in Clinical and Care Contexts

PP 0719 The use of mobile media in the self-management of Asthma and COPD: A systematic review

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Mobile health (mHealth) technologies have become increasingly relevant in supporting the self-management of chronic diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). In Germany, approximately four million people are affected by asthma and COPD respectively. While the potential of mHealth for symptom tracking, medication adherence, and empowerment is widely acknowledged, empirical evidence regarding how patients with asthma and COPD actually use mobile technologies for chronic disease management remains fragmented. Against this background, this systematic review synthesises the current empirical research on mHealth use in the self-management of asthma and COPD (RQ1a) and investigates to what extent extant research accounts for the multiplicity of mobile devices involved (RQ1b).

Following PRISMA guidelines, a comprehensive search was conducted across several databases commonly used in medical, psychological, and communication research. Included were original empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2007 and 2025 in English. Moreover, studies had to target patients diagnosed with asthma or COPD as primary users of mHealth tools for self-management.

To ensure methodological transparency, we implemented a two-stage screening process combining automated and manual review procedures. After deduplication in Rayyan, records were imported into ASReview LAB for active learning-based screening. Articles classified as relevant were subsequently subjected to independent double screening in Rayyan by three reviewers. Discrepancies between reviewers were resolved by consensus. After excluding duplicates and grey literature, 6,671 records were screened, leading to a final sample of 202 studies included in the review

Data analysis is based on a codebook capturing general bibliographic details, study and sample characteristics, types and features of mHealth technologies, study design and data collection methods, operationalisations of mHealth use as well as detailed study results regarding mobile media use in the context of managing Asthma and COPD.

The coding process follows the principles of manual quantitative content analysis. After coder training, inter-coder reliability between two coders was assessed and found sufficient (Krippendorff's Alpha ≥ 0.7). Currently, we are in the process of data extraction, which will be followed by descriptive statistical analysis using R. After coding 15% of the sample, preliminary findings indicate that studies regularly declare conflicts of interest due to pharmaceutical sponsoring and mainly rely on observational data (such as app log-ins), often in an interventional context. On average, one or two mobile devices are assessed (M = 1.6, SD = 0.62), mostly specific apps. Both frequency as well as adherence are the most common measures of mHealth use, with documenting health data (such as oxygen saturation) and symptoms as the purpose most often focused on.

Our review will provide an integrative overview of empirical approaches to mHealth-supported self-management in chronic respiratory care. By examining both the range of mHealth practices and the consideration of multiple-device usage, the study aims to identify conceptual and methodological gaps in existing research and to inform future development and evaluation of mHealth strategies for people with asthma and COPD.

HCO05 Health Communication in Clinical and Care Contexts

PP 0720 From trust to compliance: How source type and uncertainty shape public health behaviour in a crisis

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Trust has long been central to research on health communication (e.g., Cairns et al., 2013; Freimuth et al., 2014). Different attempts have been made to measure trust (Holroyd et al., 2021), reach vulnerable groups (Privor-Dumm & King, 2020), and highlight the importance of health literacy (Schuh et al., 2025). Calls have also been issued for institutions to provide high-quality health information that is "accessible, actionable, and trustworthy across different populations" (Ratzan et al., 2025, p. 234). While much of the trust research focuses on this aspect as the dependent variable, we argue that there is a need for more research on trust as a mediating variable for *compliance* with public health advice (Bargain & Aminjonov, 2020; Fox et al., 2025; Wollebæk et al., 2022).

Research has identified numerous factors influencing compliance, such as social pressure and prevailing norms (e.g., Cabrera-Álvarez et al., 2022; Shapiro et al., 2023). Public response can also be conditioned by other factors such as concerns about infection, living conditions, language, culture, work situation, and socioeconomic conditions (Norwegian Official Report, 2021). Trust in science and scientists is also considered a significant factor in the public's acceptance of health advice (Angelou et al., 2023; Breakwell & Jaspal, 2020). In this paper, we address *the relationship between trust, source type, and behavioral compliance under conditions of uncertainty and across national contexts.*

Health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are characterized by information overload, competing recommendations, and heightened uncertainty, requiring citizens to evaluate multiple sources to decide what to believe and how to act. Building on scholarship linking trust to compliance, this study examines how trust and perceived trustworthiness—conceptualized as competence, integrity, and benevolence (Mayer et al., 1995)—shape willingness to comply with public health recommendations when messages originate from different sources and communicate uncertainty in different ways.

Following calls for stronger considerations of culture and cross-national comparisons in crisis and risk communication (Kim, 2025), we report findings from a cross-national survey experiment (N = 4,500) conducted in Germany, Italy, and Romania, three countries that vary in institutional trust and political context. Participants were exposed to identical public health recommendations attributed to one of four sources—national public health authorities, personal physicians, independent epidemiologists, or religious leaders—and framed either with categorical certainty or with explicit acknowledgment of scientific uncertainty. Trust is measured both as pre-existing trust in the source and as message-induced perceptions of trustworthiness.

The study addresses three research questions: (1) how trust and trustworthiness of different sources influence compliance across national trust contexts; (2) how uncertainty acknowledgment affects compliance, and whether this effect depends on source type and contextual trust; and (3) how individual-level factors, including media use, education, and ideological orientation, interact with trust and uncertainty communication to shape compliance intentions.

By shifting focus from message resonance to behavioral outcomes, and from trust as an outcome to trust as a conditional mechanism linking source, uncertainty, and compliance, this study advances research on public health and crisis communication and offers comparative, experimentally grounded insights into when trust-based communication is most likely to succeed.

HCO05 Health Communication in Clinical and Care Contexts

PP 0721 Patterns of patient-generated health data in Value-Based Health-Care Frameworks

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Healthcare services and products are rapidly changing due to the development of new technologies, offering relevant solutions to improve patient outcomes. Patient-Generated Health Data and knowledge-sharing across the European Union (EU) have a great potential to make healthcare provision more effective and efficient by putting the patient at the centre of

the healthcare process. While such initiatives have been taken before, a uniting and overarching approach is still missing. Within the EU-funded [*Anonymized*] project, an evidence-based and actual framework to effectively leverage the added value of people-centred integrated healthcare solutions will be developed, using predominantly patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs), patient preference information (PPI), patient-reported experience measures (PREMs), and other Patient-Generated Health Data (PGHD) (Author 2 et al. 2024).

This paper will present concept patterns of PREMs and PPI, focusing on 11 different disease areas and reported in systematic reviews between 2019 and 2024. The research is motivated by the findings that the very most of the patient-generated health data are based on PROMs, while PREMs and PPI are underrepresented. Patient-reported experience measures (PREMs) are psychometrically validated tools used to capture patients' interactions with healthcare systems and the degree to which their needs are being met. Patient-reported experience measures are designed to determine whether patients have experienced specific care processes, rather than their overall satisfaction with the care received. Patient preference information (PPI) is a qualitative or quantitative assessment of the relative desirability or acceptability to patients of features that differ among alternative health states, health interventions, or health services (Russo et al., 2019).

The research is based on an umbrella review where 273 systematic reviews were qualitatively analysed. The data were gathered in four different steps: Four databases (PubMed, Embase.com, CINAHL, and Scopus - search date: 04-04-2024) were searched in the first step using a data limit of publication year 2014 onwards, focusing on literature reviews. With the help of the AI-based tool ASReview, 12,473 records were obtained. In the second step, the titles and abstracts of all records were screened within the so-called Screenathon Review Event (Author 3, 2024; Author 1, 2025). As a result, 4,286 on-topic papers were received, the full text of which was analysed according to the relevance for the project in the third step. The 273 papers obtained were coded in the last step according to the quality of patient-generated health data. It could be understood that less than 10% of the review papers deal with PREMs and PPIs. In the current stage of the research, all review papers dealing with PREMs and PPIs are qualitatively analysed regarding the concept patterns that describe their potential contribution to integrating patient experiences and preferences into healthcare decision-making. Initial results show that the inclusion of PREMs and PPIs in decision-making processes leads to increased patient engagement at an early stage, which improves the quality of value-based health care, especially since PREMs and PPIs take into account the aspect of patient perception and prevent a reduction to post-priori reporting.

HCO06 Qualitative Approaches to Technologies of Care

PN 78 Between care and control: The role of warm experts in digitally mediated ageing

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This presentation critically examines the potentially ambivalent role of "warm experts" in the care of older adults in Sweden. Its main contribution is a critical re-evaluation of the assumption that warm experts necessarily act in older adults' best interests. Warm experts are understood here as non-professional helpers—typically family members, neighbours, or friends—who facilitate older adults' use of digital technologies and digital communication (cf. Bakardjieva, 2005). They are commonly contrasted with "cold experts", such as formal helpdesks, institutional ICT guidelines, and professional trainers. Previous research shows that many older adults depend on warm experts to navigate an increasingly digitalised health and social care system (cf. Hänninen et al., 2021). Critical scholarship has further demonstrated that this reliance is problematic in several respects: for older adults, it risks exacerbating inequalities in access to health and social care services and deepening digital exclusion; for warm experts, it entails performing unpaid tasks that would otherwise fall within the responsibility of healthcare providers, work that is often gendered and disproportionately carried by women (cf. Olsson & Viscovi, 2018)The arguments presented draw on interviews with health and social care professionals in the Swedish health and social care systems. It is argued that warm experts are typically framed as benevolent figures whose emotional proximity ensures trust and digital inclusion. Yet this discourse of warmth risks obscuring conflictual dynamics, uneven care responsibilities, and the possibility that relatives' interests may diverge from those of the older adults. The presentation asks about the ethical implications of a healthcare system that increasingly relies on 'warm experts' for digital facilitation and inclusion. Special attention is given to the impact of new digital technologies, particularly serveillance and monitoring devices, which extend the scope of warm experts' responsibilities and place them in a position as moral arbiters in balancing safety, privacy and autonomy. The presentation illuminates how welfare policies that implicitly rely on familial care labour raises questions about equity, responsibility, and safety within a digitally mediated eldercare. The analysis is theoretically grounded in care ethics and science and technology studies, conceptualising warm experts as relational care actors who mediate between digitally organised welfare systems and older adults' everyday lives. Drawing on feminist and STS care studies, the presentation treats warmth not as an inherently benevolent quality, but as a normative framework that allocates responsibility and moral authority within asymmetrical relationships (Mol, 2008; Mol et al., 2015; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). From a domestication perspective, warm experts are understood as translators of sociotechnical arrangements, whose interventions necessarily involve moral judgement and power. The introduction of digital surveillance and monitoring technologies further intensifies this role, positioning warm experts as delegated agents of governance who must balance institutional demands for safety and efficiency against older adults' privacy and autonomy.

HCO06 Qualitative Approaches to Technologies of Care

PN 79 (In)formal approaches to handling frequent use of anonymous mediated helplines

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Anonymous helpline services have developed into an increasingly important form of mediated support for people in vulnerable situations related to e.g. illness, suicidal thoughts, grief and mental health problems (Dadfar & Lester, 2021). Helplines began as a telephone-based form of interaction, but today often also include chat and SMS.As specific technologies of care, helplines are characterised by being free, anonymous, and easily accessible, which provides other possibilities of care than the ones within the traditional healthcare system. However, this very accessibility also creates new tensions in the form of frequent use, which is a well-known phenomenon – both among helpline practitioners and in the research literature (Middleton et al., 2016; Mishara et al., 2023; RådgivningsDanmark, 2019). Frequent use has been shown to have significant volume. A study of the Australian crisis line Lifeline (Pirkis et al., 2016) found that 3% of users accounted for 60% of the 735,000 answered calls. Frequent use is often problematised as a practice that blocks access for other users, challenges helpline staff's wellbeing at work, or ultimately fails to provide frequent users with the help they actually need (Kinzel & Nanson, 2000; MacKinnon, 1998; Sercombe et al., 2025). Existing research on frequent use interventions has primarily examined formal strategies aimed at limiting or restricting use (Mishara et al., 2023), often drawing on studies from a single helpline (Pirkis et al. 2016, Hall & Schlosar, 1995). Existing interventions include limiting the number and duration of calls allowed, assigning a specific counsellor or referring the frequent user to other care services. In this paper, we shift the focus to investigating how helplines approach frequent use across a broad spectrum of strategies- not only those designed to minimise use- drawing on data from ten different helplines. Furthermore, we broaden the focus to understanding how such interventions are negotiated,applied, and sometimes invented by responders "on the floor". The study investigates the complex (technological) care work required to support the very diverse group of frequent users while also caring for the responders who provide support. Methodologically, the study uses document analysis of internal documents about frequent use approaches, 21 interviews with helpline responders and observations of conversations and on-site interviews with responders. The paper demonstrates how frequent use is addressed through formal organisational strategies, and how these strategies are subsequently interpreted, renegotiated, and variably enacted by individual responders. Moreover, by illustrating how responders also invent and employ informal, ad hoc communicative practices to navigate frequent use and deliver mediated care, the paper extends the scholarly understanding of intervention practices targeting frequent use. Our findings reveal the considerable complexity involved in communicating and operationalising formal approaches to frequent use within helpline organisations, particularly as many of these rely on volunteer responders. The study underscores that developing formal approaches is not sufficient; it is equally essential to understand how such approaches are interpreted, negotiated, and produced in everyday practice.

HCO06 Qualitative Approaches to Technologies of Care

PN 80 Emoticons as communicative care work in digital therapy with adolescents

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Digital text-based interaction constitutes a distinctive communicative environment in which care is enacted through written language, temporal flexibility, and digital affordances (Grønning, 2021). In the context of digital mental health services, care is not only delivered through therapeutic content but also negotiated interactionally through ongoing practices of relational and communicative work. Drawing on conceptualizations of care as situated, relational, and inherently ambivalent (Fischer & Tronto, 1990; Bellacasa, 2017), this study examines how seemingly minor communicative resources, emoticons, function as part of the sociomaterial arrangements of technologically mediated care. The study addresses the research question: What communicative functions do emoticons serve in chat-based interactions between adolescents (aged 12–17) and their therapists? The empirical material consists of 18 chat-based therapeutic interactions from an internet-delivered cognitive behavioral therapy (ICBT) program for adolescents with anxiety disorders. The data were collected as part of the CoolMinds project at the Centre for Digital Psychiatry, Region of Southern Denmark, and include both planned and on-demand written therapist guidance delivered asynchronously via a secure digital platform. Methodologically, the study applies Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) (Herring, 2007) to explore how emoticons operate as contextualization cues within professional care communication. Messages were manually coded using the functional framework developed by Skovholt, Grønning, and Kankaanranta (2014), focusing on emoticons as markers of positive stance, as strengtheners of expressive acts, and as softeners of directives. This qualitative approach foregrounds interactional detail rather than outcome measures, allowing insight into how care is practically accomplished and negotiated in text-based therapeutic encounters. While adolescents employ a limited set of conventional emojis, therapists draw on a wide repertoire to manage affect, structure communication, and maintain relational continuity. Two dominant patterns emerge. First, emoticons are used as presentational and administrative tools that frame interaction, signal availability, and sustain a supportive communicative climate. Second, emoticons function as hedges within care work: as strengtheners when offering encouragement and

affirmation, and as softeners when delivering challenges, instructions, or corrective guidance. Notably, emoticons are not used to mark humor or irony, underscoring the seriousness and ethical sensitivity of the therapeutic context. These findings highlight the ambivalent role of emoticons in digital care practices. On the one hand, they support relational closeness, emotional attunement, and continuity of care across distance; on the other hand, they raise questions about professionalism, interpretive responsibility, and the boundaries of therapeutic communication. By examining emoticons as integral to the communicative labor of care rather than as peripheral expressive devices, this study contributes to a qualitative understanding of how technologies of care reconfigure relational norms, professional roles, and ethical negotiations in digital mental health settings.

HCO06 Qualitative Approaches to Technologies of Care

PN 81 Sleep care: A qualitative inquiry into people's mediated sleep practices

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This paper presents preliminary findings from qualitative data collected in Denmark in 2026 as part of the ToSleep project (funded by The Carlsberg Foundation). Although sleep and media use is clearly an interdisciplinary topic, existing research has been dominated by health sciences, often focusing on smartphones, blue light exposure, or the frequency and duration of phone use and their effects on sleep (Exelmans & Bulck, 2019). This focus has left less room for understanding how individuals meaningfully integrate media and technologies into their nightly routines and how these practices relate to broader questions about care and ethics of care (Fischer & Tronto, 1990). As a contribution from the health humanities to the expanding field of sleep and health communication, ToSleep explores the mediation of sleep and sleep media's potentially decelerative and "rest-making" capacities and argues for qualitative and situated accounts of how people negotiate sleep in everyday life and how technologies participate in relations of sleep care. Sleep is inherently a matter of care: It is labour-intensive, embedded in lifeworlds, attuned to individual rhythms, and shaped by relational dependencies (Bellacasa, 2017). It is also sociotechnically mediated and ethically charged (Protasi, 2025), situated within political debates about rest, vulnerability, productivity, and the pressures of the 24/7 society (Crary, 2013). Combining post-digital theory (Fast & Syvertsen, 2024; Cramer, 2015), existential media studies (Lagerkvist 2022), and critical data studies (Markham, 2018; Pink et al., 2018; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2020), the study examines the ambivalences arising as self-care and sleep are tied up with digital technologies. Sleep care technologies are not neutral solutions but contested arrangements, entangled in digital infrastructures that produce the very conditions of existence: On the one hand, they have decelerative capacities and can offer ecperiences of slow-down and disconnection. On the other they increase exposure, datafication and commodification of an intimate bodily practice, subtly reconfiguring how individuals inhabit their nights, their bodies, and their possibilities for rest. Our analysis approaches sleep as both a bodily and technological entanglement (Coveney et al., 2023), and as a form of existential media practice (Lagerkvist, 2022). We suggest that sleep media in our digital-material lifeworld act as "companions" with decelerative potential at the limit between wakefulness and sleep. Combining data from qualitative interviews, media-sleep diaries and speculative workshops with Danish citizens, 18+ of age (some of whom track their sleep using digital technologies) we analyse the enteanglements of media in nightly routines and rituals highlighting the ambivalent role of technology in comtemporary practices of sleep. More importantly, our study contributes to understanding sleep as a matter that requires collective forms of care, rather than mere individual optimization, and argues for the cultivation of a "critical sleep literacy". The analysis explores not only participants' mediated sleep practices but also their visions and imaginaires for a better sleep in the future and what role technologies can play in it.

HCO06 Qualitative Approaches to Technologies of Care

PN 82 Practising care elsewhere: Men, chronic illness, and technologies of care

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Based on 17 individual in-depth interviews with men living with chronic illness, this paper explores how care and self-care (Fischer & Tronto, 1990; Bellacasa, 2017) are practised and communicated in ways and places beyond designated peer-driven health communities on social media. Research has shown that peer-driven communities on social media can serve as central sites for care, support, and knowledge exchange among individuals living with chronic illnesses (Kingod et al., 2017; McCosker, 2018; Tucker and Goodings, 2017). Thesespaces are often characterised by emotionally expressive, verbally articulated, and explicitly caring interactions. However, this dominant framing risks overlooking forms of care that do not centre illness talk or emotional disclosure and that may therefore remain less visible within existing understandings of peer support. Rather than centring illness narratives, the men in this study often engage in care through other forms of shared activities, both online and offline, allowing support to emerge without explicit vulnerability. Care is practised through practices of "doing rather than telling" and engaging in activities that are not necessarily framed as health-related or otherwise connected to their chronic conditions. These practices enable forms of connection and mutual support while avoiding modes of communication that require overt emotionalexpression or the explicit articulation of illness experiences. As such, care is present, but it is enacted in indirect, situational, and often understated ways. These practices contrast with

the emotionally expressive care strategies commonly found in women-dominated health communities on social media, where sharing personal experiences, emotions, and bodily vulnerabilities is often central. The paper does not suggest that men reject care or self-care; rather, it shows how care is reconfigured in ways that align with men's understandings of themselves and their social relations while living with various chronic conditions. Care is thus shaped by ongoing negotiations of masculinity,where expectations of strength, autonomy, and emotional restraint coexist with the need for support and connection (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014).The paper argues that these negotiations produce ambivalent forms of connection that both enable care and constrain its articulation. While such practices make care possible without threatening masculine identities, they also limit what can be named, shared, or recognised as care by the men themselves. By foregrounding these less visible practices, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of care among men living with chronic illness. It shows that care does indeed exist, but often in forms and spaces that fall outside normative, women-dominated models of care, and therefore risks remaining unrecognised within current frameworks for peer support and health-related care.

HCO07 Misinformation, Credibility and Persuasion in Digital Environments

PP 0930 Understanding psychological misconceptions: The impact of information sources, epistemic attitudes and cognitive abilities

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Background and objectives

Psychological misconceptions are widely held but scientifically unsupported beliefs about human thought, behavior, or mental processes (e.g., that people use only 10% of their brain power or that only deeply depressed individuals commit suicide), which can negatively affect health and wellbeing (Bensley & Lilienfeld, 2017). Interventions aimed at correcting these beliefs have often been ineffective, potentially due to a limited understanding of the factors driving their endorsement. While previous research has identified some drivers, the relative contribution of environmental determinants (e.g., exposure to inaccurate information across various media), attitudinal factors, and cognitive predispositions remains poorly understood. Moreover, prior research has often relied on student samples, limiting generalizability of findings. The present study addresses these gaps using a nationally representative UK sample, examining how demographic factors, political orientation, reliance on different information sources, attitudes toward psychology, and cognitive abilities predict misconception endorsement.

Methods

We conducted a pre-registered survey to assess the prevalence of psychological misconceptions in a nationally representative sample of UK adults (n = 2,610), recruited via YouGov's online panel. Misconceptions were measured using the 55-item misconceptions test (Gardner & Brown, 2013). Participants also reported their attitudes toward psychology as a science (e.g., belief in its scientific rigour) and the use of nine different sources of information to learn about psychology (e.g., social media, TV series or films, self-help books). Additionally, we measured participants' cognitive reflection (i.e., the ability to inhibit intuitive responses and engage in analytic reasoning) and numeracy. Hierarchical multiple linear regressions were conducted, entering demographics and political orientation first, followed information sources, attitudes toward psychology, and cognitive abilities.

Results

Misconceptions were more common among older adults, women, individuals with lower educational attainment, and those with a right-leaning political orientation. After controlling for demographics and political orientation, greater reliance on celebrity magazines, social media, and self-help books was associated with higher misconception endorsement. Conversely, misconceptions were less common among individuals with more positive attitudes toward psychology as a science and those with higher cognitive reflection and numeracy. Moreover, a higher prevalence of misconceptions correlated with greater willingness to consider wellbeing interventions lacking empirical support.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that belief in psychological misconceptions is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by cognitive abilities, epistemic attitudes and reliance on lifestyle-oriented information sources. Consequently, overcoming misconceptions is likely to require interventions that move beyond fact correction by enhancing analytical thinking and fostering trust in psychology as a science. Furthermore, interventions should target sources where misconceptions are prevalent and be sensitive to ideological worldviews to minimize resistance.

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HCO07 Misinformation, Credibility and Persuasion in Digital Environments

PP 0931 Combating health misinformation and disinformation on social media: A narrative review of recent research

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The digitalization of healthcare means increased access to health and medical information, including mis- and disinformation (Torkkola & Sendra-Toset, 2026). Particularly prevalent on social media, health mis- and disinformation pose a great challenge for public health (Rodgers & Massac, 2020). While plenty of studies have characterized social media health mis- and disinformation and its impact on public opinion and health behaviors, there is a paucity of research providing empirical evidence on effective interventions against this phenomenon. To better understand how to effectively combat health mis- and disinformation, we conducted a comprehensive search of literature in August 2025. The search was carried out on the Web of Science Core Collection database, and the results were refined by publication year (2021–2025), document type (article) and language (English). Of the 356 references retrieved in the initial sample, only 27 references were included in the final review. Findings show that the studies tested up to 31 interventions, which can be classified into five groups: health promotion activities (n = 9), warnings and fact-checks (n = 7), corrections (n = 7), heuristic and formatting cues (n = 6), and online communities (n = 2). With an average of 1015 participants per intervention, results also reveal that most studies were conducted in the US (n = 15), pursued an experimental design (n = 25), tested the intervention on Facebook (n = 14), and addressed COVID-19 (n = 19) mis- and disinformation – both generally and in relation to vaccines. The variety of social media interventions against health mis- and disinformation supports the idea that combating this phenomenon is a complex task, as different types of mis- and disinformation require different interventions (Larson, 2018). This complexity is also underlined when looking at the efficacy of these interventions individually, which shows that some of the interventions influence health outcomes only partially (e.g., by improving vaccine confidence but not vaccination rates). Similarly, there is a lack of interventions involving closed social media platforms like WhatsApp, which is a particularly troubling finding considering previous research showing this social media platform as the main channel where health mis- and disinformation was distributed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Salaverría et al., 2020). The findings of this review complement those of earlier studies (Walter et al., 2021), in addition to laying the groundwork for further research into social media interventions against health mis- and disinformation.

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HCO07 Misinformation, Credibility and Persuasion in Digital Environments

PP 0932 Debunking health misinformation on TikTok: An experimental study on epistemic authority, appearance, and emotional messaging

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Rationale and conceptual framework

Short-form video platforms such as TikTok have become central sources of science and health information. While they offer low-threshold opportunities for health promotion (Engel et al., 2023), they also facilitate the spread of misinformation (O'Sullivan et al., 2022). At the same time, social media can function as a space for correcting misinformation (Walter et al., 2021). Yet it remains unclear under which conditions debunking efforts are effective—specifically, which debunkers are perceived as legitimate epistemic authorities and how corrective messages should be framed. Prior research provides mixed evidence: experts often outperform other sources in correcting misinformation (Vraga & Bode, 2017), yet users also tend to trust sources they perceive as similar to themselves, such as lay people (Heiss et al., 2024) or (AI-generated) influencers (Sikorski et al., 2026). Moreover, emotional (debunking) messages have been shown to undermine truth discernment (Martel et al., 2020), while simultaneously reducing belief in false claims (Phillips et al., 2025) and eliciting higher engagement than neutral messages (Chao et al., 2021). Against this backdrop, this study examines how different *types* and *appearances of epistemic authorities*, as well as the *emotional framing* of debunking messages, shape the effectiveness of misinformation correction on TikTok.

Method

We conducted a preregistered online experiment in the United States using a 2 (epistemic authority: scientist vs. influencer) × 2 (appearance: human vs. AI-generated) × 2 (messaging style: emotional vs. neutral) between-subjects design. Ethics approval was obtained. A power analysis in R (pwr package) assumed a minimum effect size of Cohen's $f = 0.15$, $\alpha = .05$, and power = .80, indicating a required sample of 648 participants. To account for attrition and failed attention checks, 152 additional participants were added, resulting in a target sample of 800 (100 per cell). Participants are currently being recruited via Prolific using quota sampling.

In a pretest ($n = 75$), five debunked TikTok misinformation claims were evaluated for familiarity and believability. Two topics with relatively high believability and low familiarity—raw milk consumption and sunscreen use—were selected. Based on these topics, we produced 16 TikTok-style debunking videos, with AI avatars generated from videos recorded with human actors using HeyGen's video production tools. Participants first view a misinformation TikTok video, followed by the corresponding debunking video.

Measures

Primary outcomes include perceived credibility of the debunking message, perceived trustworthiness of the epistemic authority, and intention to share the debunking video. Additional measures include deference to scientific authority and AI, emotional involvement, perceived emotions during exposure, perceived misinformation accuracy, prior attitudes, TikTok use and credibility, and media literacy. All items were adapted from prior research (e.g., Greussing et al., 2025; Heiss et al., 2024; Hendriks et al., 2015) and measured on seven-point Likert scales.

Contribution

This study advances science and health communication research by examining how authority cues, AI-generated appearance, and emotional framing jointly shape misinformation debunking on short-form video platforms.

HCO07 Misinformation, Credibility and Persuasion in Digital Environments

PP 0933 Effects of social media source and message labels on perceived message credibility, message engagement, and persuasion of nutrition information

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Social media have become key sources of nutrition-related information (e.g., recipes, weight loss advice, food safety information), but the high prevalence of misinformation about this topic is increasingly concerning (Denniss et al., 2023). This study tests two labeling strategies that may help social media users to distinguish between more vs. less trustworthy content: (1) source verification labels which signal a content creator's nutritional expertise, and (2) message accuracy labels that provide information about the correctness of particular content, either through (a) refutational fact-checks (indicating that the content is judged as incorrect) or (b) general accuracy prompts (warning that social media content may contain inaccuracies). We hypothesize that source labels increase message credibility and in turn, message engagement intentions (liking/sharing the social media post), and persuasion (attitudes and intentions towards the message content), while message labels, especially fact-checks, decrease these outcomes.

An online experiment (preregistered via https://aspredicted.org/x7h2-p7jb.pdf) was conducted using a 2 (source verification label: present vs. absent) by 3 (message label: refutational fact-check message vs. accuracy prompt vs. no label) between-subjects design. The final sample consisted of 275 participants aged 18–29 (M = 24.73, SD = 3.33). Participants first viewed a simulated Instagram profile, and then watched a video post with nutrition advice, which (depending on the condition) contained a source and/or message label. After stimulus exposure, the following dependent variables were assessed: message credibility, message engagement intentions, attitudes and intentions towards following the nutrition advice presented in the social media post.

Manipulation and randomization checks were successful. Preliminary findings using a MANOVA showed that source label did not significantly affect message credibility, message engagement intentions, attitudes toward the nutritional advice, or intentions to follow it (all p values > .05). However, message label type significantly affected message credibility, $F(2, 269) = 4.58$, $p = .011$, n2 = .03, attitudes towards the nutritional advice, $F(2, 269) = 9.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, and intentions to follow this advice, $F(2, 269) = 5.00$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .04$, but not message engagement intentions ($p > .05$). As expected, refutational factcheck labels led to the lowest scores on credibility, attitudes, and intentions, followed by accuracy prompts, and then no label. Post-hoc tests showed that differences were most consistently found between the refutational fact check label vs. no label. Finally, no interaction effects between source and message label were found (all p values > .05).

Our preliminary findings suggest that refutational fact-check labels reduce message credibility, as well as attitudes and intentions towards the nutrition advice, compared to no labels (and for attitude, compared to accuracy prompts). Source labels show no significant impact. As no interaction effects were observed either, message-focused interventions seem to be more effective than source verification in addressing nutrition misinformation on social media. Mediation analyses will

be conducted to examine the full moderated mediation model (with message credibility as mediator) and findings will be presented at the Ecrea 2026 conference.

HCO07 Misinformation, Credibility and Persuasion in Digital Environments

PP 0934 For risks and side effects, ask the internet – The effect of online information quality on subjective and objective health informedness

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Most people rely on the Internet for health information (Wang et al., 2020), as it enables them to quickly obtain various information on health-related topics (Clarke et al., 2015). Access to high-quality information can support informed decision-making by helping individuals avoid harmful materials or behaviors (Chen et al., 2018). However, there is a risk of encountering incomplete or false information online (Battineni et al., 2020), which can lead to health problems when relying on such information (Swire-Thompson, 2019). Previous studies which measured the effect of online health information on individuals' informedness about health-related topics relied on self-reports (e.g., Thapa et al., 2021), leaving the actual effects of such information under-researched.

Our study used an online assessment consisting mainly of first-year students (N = 456; 48% female) to investigate how using online health information of varying information quality affects individuals' informedness on specific health-related topics. Participants conducted an online search on one of three different health-related scenarios (e.g., health risks of certain ingredients). The scenarios were created in collaboration with experts on these topics. Following the search task, participants were asked to write a statement regarding the respective scenario, additionally indicating which websites they had used. Finally, participants rated their subjective informedness, e.g., having selected relevant information on 4-point scales (4 = very sure).

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to assess the information quality of the websites visited (N = 445). Categories included completeness and correctness. Completeness was measured using a quotient between 0 and 100, based on the amount of scenario-related information found on a website. Correctness was measured based on the scenario-relevant information presented on a website, using a 5-point Likert-scale (5 = exclusively correct). Objective informedness was rated in cooperation with the creators of the scenarios. Up to 6 points were given based on the comprehensiveness and correctness of the participants' statements.

Regression analyses controlling for sociodemographic variables were conducted to examine the influence of the information quality of the websites visited on both objective and subjective informedness. The results showed that both completeness (b = 0.02; F(1, 467) = 49.4; p < .001***; Adj. R^2 = 0.09) and correctness (b = 0.17; F(1, 467) = 13.2; p < .001***; Adj. R^2 = 0.03) had a positive effect on objective informedness, whereas no significant effect on subjective informedness was observed. Furthermore, a correlation test between objective and subjective informedness revealed no significant relationship (Spearman's r = 0.05; p = .30).

Results indicate that using high-quality health information leads to participants being better informed about the respective topic. However, participants do not seem to be able to assess whether the information they used was of high quality and whether they are now better informed. Regardless of the websites' information quality, participants rated their subjective informedness as rather high (M = 2.91; SD = 0.63). Therefore, participants seem to overestimate their informedness and not to deliberately select high-quality information. This indicates the need for further promotion of health literacy for online environments, so that individuals can identify high-quality information.

HCO08 Mental Health on Social Media – Dynamics, User Practices, Representations and Effects

PN 88 Young adults' mental-health-related social media practices and trust heuristics

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This contribution provides an empirically grounded, nuanced analytical account of how young adults make sense of a highly personal yet socio-political issue such as mental health in a "post-truth," platform-capitalist media ecosystem. We draw on data from 98 young adults in Austria, Estonia and the UK generated within the European project XXX. Participants contributed either through social media elicitation interviews (n = 47) or by creating autoethnographic accounts of their social media use (n = 51). Both the interview and the autoethnography prompted participants to specifically consider how and why they trust some health and wellbeing content and interactions on social media while they might distrust others. The project received ethics clearance separately from the three institutions and all participants provided informed consent. We relied on our participants' own interpretations of what counted as everyday health and wellbeing content and as social media. Social media platforms that participants most engaged with were Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube. Participants brought up a wide variety of health topics, including (but not limited to) nutrition and diet, skincare, fitness, sexual health, specific illnesses, public health messaging (such as Covid-19 advice), vaccination and medical science.

Mental health emerged as a recurring health topic that our participants chose to focus on. We therefore decided to further investigate the data that was coded as mental health-related in a first round of thematic coding. Following a Grounded Theory-approach, we conducted several additional rounds of analytic coding and memoing with this dataset: We first examined what topics and concerns participants perceived and framed as mental health content: Young people invoke a remarkably broad range of issues under the vague umbrella of "mental health"—from affirmations to anxiety and from schizophrenia to self-care. This reflects rising societal awareness and destigmatization of mental illness but also a broader psychiatrization of contemporary society, where psychological vocabularies permeate everyday life and where individual responsibility for well-being is emphasized. In the second step, we investigated users' trust heuristics and their practices of (dis)trusting mental health content and its creators. Trust emerged through the interplay and (mis)alignment of user-, creator-, and content-related dimensions. In the user dimension, trust is shaped by the user's current situation and practice orientations with cognitive, affective and conative layers. In the creator dimension, trust depends on perceived authenticity and motivation—whether expressed feelings appear sincere and whether creators' motives are deemed legitimate. In the content dimension, trust is shaped by how tone, rhetoric, style and factfulness are evaluated. Overall, our contribution illustrates the importance of micro-level analyses of how young people engage with mental health content and creators, showing complex, situated practices that exceed simple causal models. This aligns with critical research emphasizing the social and mediated construction of mental health phenomena.

HCO08 Mental Health on Social Media – Dynamics, User Practices, Representations and Effects

PN 89 The everyday use of mental illness-related social media content: Motives, practices, and user types

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Social media has become an important space for finding information about mental illness, sharing personal experiences, seeking support, and participating in conversations and communities (Naslund et al., 2020). Existing research into mental illness-related social media content (MI-SMC) has largely focused on mental illness portrayals and potential effects of MI-SMC on users (Aydin et al., 2020; Nicomedes et al., 2024; Schaller et al., 2023). Less is known, however, about how and why regular users engage with MI-SMC, particularly regarding their motives, user practices, and the ways these practices are embedded in everyday MI-related communication. Applying a repertoire perspective, which considers how users combine, select, and contextualize content within their broader communication repertoires and communicative routines (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006), we therefore examine how regular users engage with MI-SMC in their everyday lives. We specifically focus on their motives and user practices (RQ1), as well as potentially distinct user types of MI-SMC based on their individual MI-SMC repertoires (RQ2). To address these questions, we conducted two complementary studies recruiting regular users of MI-SMC via Prolific. First, a cross-sectional survey with 298 participants (age: M = 33.2 years, SD = 11.3; 48.7% male, 50.7% female, 0.7% non-binary; 37.3% with prior personal experience of mental illness) assessed frequency of use, motives for reading, sharing, and creating content, engagement in MI-related online conversations, and perceptions of MI-SMC. Findings show that users frequently engaged with different types of content, from self-help and inspirational posts to personal stories and informational content, primarily to gain information and connect with others with similar experiences. Sharing and creation practices were reported by 45.4% of participants, most often motivated by altruistic motives such as providing information, raising awareness, and offering emotional support. Online conversations about mental illness, mostly via social networks and messenger apps, were reported by 56.9% and also mainly driven by other-focused motivations. Second, a qualitative interview study with 15 users (12 female, 3 male; age 19 to 46 years; 12 with personal and 5 with indirect MI experience) explored motivations, user practices and interpersonal communication about MI in context, including repertoire maps illustrating MI-SMC's role in everyday MI-related communication. We developed a typology of user types, comprising three overarching categories with two types each: 1) Advocates include the user types support providers and community activists who engage with MI-SMC to provide help and raise awareness. 2) Observers encompass insight-seekers and monitoring preppers who use MI-SMC for introspection and to prepare for future mental health issues. 3) Copers include comfort-seekers and self-regulators who use MI-SMC to cope with and manage their mental health problems. The studies show that while engagement with different types of MI-SMC is generally high, motivations and user practices differ by user type. Findings emphasize that individual user practices of MI-SMC must be considered in their embeddedness in everyday contexts and their relation to other mental illness-related communication practices.

HCO08 Mental Health on Social Media – Dynamics, User Practices, Representations and Effects

PN 90 Community and unmasking in the autism community on Tumblr

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While long stigmatised, public discourse about autism has intensified in recent years, increasingly focusing on deficits and stereotypes. This is partly due to mainstream media representations, which frequently portray autistic people as isolated, dangerous, or inhuman (Ressa, 2021). To circumvent traditional gatekeepers, autistic people have turned to social media,

where autism can be discussed by those with actual lived experiences. Most research so far has focused on Twitter; however, as an ethnography revealed, the micro-blogging platform Tumblr is oftentimes described as "the autism website" by its users. This paper asks why this is and focuses on the intricate ways Tumblr's autism community fosters a sense of belonging and encourages self-acceptance. It argues that due to the site's affordances (e.g. pseudonymity, multimodality, non-linear temporality,…), Tumblr provides unique conditions that allow users to proudly "unmask". Developed by Devon Price, the concept of '(un)masking autism' describes the process of learning to be authentically autistic. Part of this unmasking, as Price (2022, p. 86f.) himself writes, is "finding my 'people' and seeing proof positive that there was nothing wrong with us." Since unmasking is intricately connected to belonging, Döveling et al.'s (2018) concept of Digital Affect Cultures was used to analyse the community's emotional alignment and cultural practices. Methodologically, a months-long digital ethnography served as the basis for interviews conducted with 153 autistic Tumblr users. Adhering to best practices for research with autistic participants (Gowen et al., 2019), the study offered four interview modes: (1) live via video call, (2) live via Tumblr chat, (3) non-time-sensitive via Google Forms, and (4) non-time-sensitive via voice messages. An analysis of the interviews revealed a complex collective understanding of community, yet a clear sense of emotional alignment with other autistic users. In contrast to their offline lives, the interviewees overwhelmingly report being able to unmask and still feel accepted on Tumblr. As Susitna (<18, female) puts it, "Engaging in [the community] makes me feel recognized. I'm not weird, I'm not wrong, I'm not overreacting, but I'm different than neurotypicals and that's okay." This feeling of acceptance is made possible by both the website's functions as well as the cultivated community culture of radical inclusivity, regardless of diagnosis status or support needs. This research demonstrates that, facilitated by Tumblr's affordances, the autism community has fostered an effective counter-narrative to mainstream media representations. Users have created a space characterised by authenticity, low-threshold belonging, and unprecedented acceptance, making it possible for autistic people from all walks of life to take off their figurative masks.

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HCO08 Mental Health on Social Media – Dynamics, User Practices, Representations and Effects

PN 91 Mental health on Twitch: Live-streaming, community interaction, and the risks of personalized health discourse

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Live-streaming platforms such as Twitch have experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Scerbakov et al., 2022). Initially focused on gaming-related content, Twitch has developed into a multifaceted community space that includes formats such as Just Chatting and IRL (In Real Life), where streamers engage directly with audiences to discuss personal, social, and political topics. Health has become an increasingly prominent subject within these discussions (Kim, 2024). The platform's affordances, including real-time chat and interactive features, facilitate immediate and reciprocal communication between streamers and viewers. These features foster intensified parasocial relationships, as streamers frequently respond to audience input in real time (Kowert & Daniel, 2021; Wulf et al., 2021). As a result, streamers may exert significant influence on audience opinion formation, prompting questions regarding the handling of sensitive topics such as mental health within these communities. This study investigates the prevalence and characteristics of health-related discourse, with a particular focus on mental health, on Twitch. The dataset comprises Just Chatting and IRL content from the 22 most popular German gaming streamers (12 male, 10 female), collected between January and March 2025. A total of 611 stream segments, encompassing 406,489 sentence-based documents, were analyzed using a guided topic modeling approach with BERTopic. Subsequently, health-related topics were examined using a Grounded Theory approach to develop a thematic framework (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1996).The results show that lifestyle content constitutes the majority of Twitch discourse (64.26%), followed by gameplay (15.43%) and monetization-related topics (7.81%). Health-related content accounts for a smaller yet significant proportion (2.83%). Qualitative analysis identified physical, mental, and reproductive and sexual health as the most prominent health-related themes. Mental health discussions frequently address conditions such as depression, anxiety, and ADHD. Additionally, streamers share personal experiences with therapy, loneliness, and the effects of "toxic" relationships, a process frequently described as "trauma dumping." Streamers also discuss the use of medications such as antidepressants, ADHD medication, and hormonal contraceptives, describing side effects and perceived impacts on well-being. These discussions are highly personalized and typically based on self-diagnosis and individual experience rather than medical evidence. Substance use is portrayed ambivalently, ranging from explicit discouragement to entertainment-oriented references, for example, with

games such as Drug Dealer Simulator. Mental health topics are typically explored in greater depth than other health issues, which are often mentioned only briefly and in the moment (e.g., headaches or back pain). Across themes, streamers emphasize community exchange, encourage viewers to share experiences, and position Twitch as a platform for discussing mental health and reducing stigma. However, the reliance on personal narratives and limited fact-checking, combined with real-time interaction and strong parasocial cues, raises concerns about misinformation, particularly regarding medication and substance use. Although health content remains relatively marginal within gaming communities, the highly personal and emotional nature of these discussions, along with the seemingly intimate interactions between streamers and viewers, highlights the need to critically examine live-streaming platforms as emerging sites of health communication.

HCO08 Mental Health on Social Media – Dynamics, User Practices, Representations and Effects

PN 92 From social media feeds to real-world beliefs: Intentional and incidental mental illness exposure and adolescents' prevalence estimates

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Mental illness is a prominent topic on social media, with posts tagged #MentalHealth or individual disorders like #depression or #anxiety attracting billions of views across Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Moreover, in algorithmically curated environments, social media posts discussing mental illness frequently go viral or trend on social media platforms. Although many users aim to destigmatize mental illness and cultivate a sense of belonging, their levels of expertise may vary, and conflicts of interest may emerge, especially when monetary motives are present (Kaňková et al., 2024). Moreover, overgeneralized, inaccurate, or romanticized mental health information on social media may lead to overinterpretation, where milder forms of stress may be misinterpreted as a mental illness that requires labeling and treatment, a phenomenon described in the prevalence inflation hypothesis (Foulkes & Andrews, 2023). Relatedly, recent work on cultivation theory suggests that in the context of mental illness, algorithms play a significant role in shaping users' perceptions of their social realities (Romann & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2025).In this study, we focused on adolescents, who are avid social media users and rely on social media for health information (Engel et al., 2026). We examined how their intentional and incidental exposure to mental illness content on social media is associated with the perceived prevalence of mental health problems among their peers. As part of the [blinded] project, 1432 adolescents (51.5% girls, Mage = 14.42, SD = 1.80, 12–19 years) from Switzerland (n = 643), Austria (n = 509), and Germany (n = 280) provided consent and valid answers in a school-based online survey between November 3 and December 22, 2025. On average, adolescents estimated that 33 out of 100 students at their school might have a mental illness problem (SD = 25.65). Furthermore, they reported more frequently on incidental exposure to mental illness content on social media (17.1% (very) often) than on intentional exposure (5.6% (very) often). Linear regression analysis revealed that both incidental ($\beta = .132$, $p < .001$) and intentional exposure ($\beta = .169$, $p < .001$) are positively and significantly associated with higher mental illness prevalence estimates, controlling for being female, age, having received mental illness awareness education at school and having obtained a formal mental illness diagnosis in the past, all of which showed to be positively and significantly associated with higher prevalence estimates, too ($F(6, 1269) = 49.47$, $p < .001$, $R2 = 0.19$).The results underscore that adolescents tend to overestimate the prevalence of mental health problems among their peers, which, according to the 2014–2017 KiGGs study, is around 15.4% for 11- to 17-year-olds (Baumgarten et al., 2023). They further provide support for the prevalence inflation hypothesis as more frequent exposure to mental illness content on social media is associated with higher prevalence estimates. Thus, social media may cultivate distorted beliefs about mental illness and contribute to a "medicalization of society" (Conrad, 2007), with possible detrimental consequences associated with the blurred boundaries between what are harmless and common negative mood states and what are severe mental health conditions that require treatment.

HCO09 Health Journalism and Public Health Communication

PP 1039 Threat and efficacy in Dutch newspaper coverage of antibiotic resistance: A quantitative content analysis (2010–2025)

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Background

Antibiotic resistance (ABR) is recognised as one of the most urgent public health threats (World Health Organization, 2025). ABR occurs when antibiotics that were once effective no longer successfully treat bacterial infections (Habboush & Guzman, 2023). Because people rarely encounter ABR directly, it often remains abstract to the public (Krockow et al., 2019). In the absence of direct experience, most people encounter health topics through the media (Jung & Brann, 2014). Newspapers, in particular, are widely trusted by the public and influence coverage in other media (Degeling et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2011). Previous research shows that ABR news coverage often provides a simplified view, emphasising antibiotic overuse as the main cause and focusing on system-level rather than individual solutions, while overlooking consequences and risk

groups (Bohlin & Höst, 2014; Bohlin & Höst, 2015; Capurro, 2020; Liao et al., 2021). As a result, the public may gain only a partial understanding of both the threat of ABR and potential responses.

The Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM) explains how perceived threat and perceived efficacy interact to influence responses to fear-based messages. Threat consists of severity (how serious the problem is) and susceptibility (how likely it is to affect the individual). Efficacy includes response-efficacy (whether the recommended actions are effective) and self-efficacy (whether the individual is capable in performing it) (Witte, 1992). Although originally developed for message design and evaluation, the model has also been applied to assess threat-and efficacy-related elements in media content (Grimm & Schwartz, 2021; Shim et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2016).

Purpose

This study applies the EPPM to examine how Dutch newspapers portray ABR. While the model has been widely used in content analyses of other health issues (Grimm & Schwartz, 2021; Shim et al., 2021; Shim et al., 2016), it has not yet been applied to media representations of ABR. This leads to the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Dutch newspaper articles about ABR contain references to severity, susceptibility, response-efficacy, and self-efficacy?
2. To what extent are different causes of ABR mentioned in Dutch newspaper articles?

Method

This study conducts a quantitative content analysis of Dutch national and regional newspaper articles published between 2010 and 2025. The sample consists of print and online news articles retrieved from Nexis Uni using the search term “antibiotic* AND resistent*”. Eight newspapers are included: four national (Algemeen Dagblad, NRC, de Volkskrant, de Telegraaf) and four regionals (Noordhollands Dagblad, de Gelderlander, de Limburger, de Stentor). After removing duplicates and articles with less than 35 words (Bohlin & Höst, 2015), the sample consists of 1,708 articles. The EPPM constructs are operationalised through four dimensions: causes, consequences (severity), risk groups (susceptibility), and solutions (response-and self-efficacy) (Shim et al., 2021; Witte, 1992). A detailed coding scheme is currently under development and will be pilot-tested on a sub-sample in January-February 2026, including intercoder reliability assessments using Krippendorff’s alpha. The full sample will be coded from March onwards.

Results

The results will be presented and discussed at the ECREA-conference.

HCO09 Health Journalism and Public Health Communication

PP 1040 From avoidance to engagement – Meaningful media experiences and their de-tabooization potential of death and dying

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According to Terror Management Theory (TMT, Greenberg et al. 1986), people tend to avoid thinking or talking about death, contributing to the tabooization of the topic in many Western societies (Brass-Rosenfield, 2022). At the same time, audiences voluntarily consume media content addressing mortality. media experiences may therefore offer a less threatening way to approach the topic. Research shows that meaningful and eudaimonic media experiences can stimulate reflection on mortality and facilitate emotional processing (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Wong, 2007). Building on these insights, recent extensions of TMT toward meaningful entertainment (TMT-ME) conceptualize such experiences as a way of engaging with mortality beyond anxiety regulation and link them to more accepting attitudes toward death (Das & De Graaf, 2024). However, it remains unclear which kinds of media portrayals encourage the engagement with the topic and may contribute to the processes of de-tabooization.

This study addresses this gap by examining expert perspectives on the de-tabooing potential of death-related media experiences. A total of 42 qualitative interviews were conducted with medical professionals who encounter death and dying in their occupational contexts (e.g. palliative care, geriatric care, general medical care; age: SD = 14.30, range: 16–61; gender: 8 male and 34 female). Experts were selected as a reflexive group with a dual perspective, combining their emotional involvement as human beings with their professional expertise in death, care, and societal taboos. This enables them to assess both informational and meaning-making qualities of media portrayals and their relevance for de-tabooization processes beyond individual audience experiences. For the interviews, participants selected a death-related media best-practice example and reflected on (1) societal and media perceptions, (2) facilitating and hindering portrayals, (3) reflective thoughts and (4) de-tabooization-relevant attitudes and behaviors. Interviews were analyzed using qualitative data analysis (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2024).

Findings show that death and dying remain as tabooed across professional, societal, private, and media contexts, characterized by conversational and behavioral avoidance. Further, participants frequently associated their media best-practice examples with components of eudaimonic experiences such as feeling emotionally moved and perceiving the content as meaningful and thought-provoking. Engagement seems to be facilitated by portrayals perceived as authentic and coherent.

Participants valued insights into dying and grieving processes, factual and practical knowledge, and non-judgmental depictions of diverse perspectives. Emotional insights into lived experiences seemed to support affective engagement, whereas romanticized, dramatized, incorrect or overly explicit portrayals were perceived as distancing or overwhelming. Meaningful thought processes associated with death-related media experiences included reflections on values and gratitude, emotional and factual learning, relevance to one's own life world, appreciation for coping strategies of depicted individuals, and broader social and cultural implications.

Our results indicate that de-tabooization can be conceptualized as a process of engagement that begins with individual reflection on the topic and may extend to follow-up communication or information-seeking.

By specifying how death-related media content can invite engagement with mortality beyond anxiety regulation, our study advances the TMT-ME framework and highlights the role of media in enabling cognitive and affective engagement with existential topics.

Keywords

De-Tabooization, Medical Experts, End-of-Life Conversations, Death

HCO09 Health Journalism and Public Health Communication

PP 1041 Health Communication in videos prior and post Covid-19: Decoding anti-vaccine communication to prevent childhood vaccine hesitancy in Spain

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Context

Vaccination remains one of the most cost-effective strategies for the prevention of infectious diseases, yet parental vaccine hesitancy continues to challenge global health systems and leads to increased healthcare costs. In Spain, the landscape of anti-vaccine messaging has shifted notably since the COVID-19 pandemic: YouTube previously dominated this space, but Odysee has since become a primary dissemination channel. This study aims to systematically analyse and compare the communication techniques and persuasive strategies employed in pre- and post-pandemic anti-vaccine videos targeting childhood immunisation, addressing a significant evidence gap in public health communication research.

Methods

A total sample of 500 videos was collected, divided equally between two platforms: 250 YouTube videos published prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and 250 Odysee videos published subsequently. To ensure ecological validity, all searches were conducted using clean browsers, without user login, and surfing as a guest, to simulate the experience of the general public searching for childhood vaccine-related content. Identical keywords and collection protocols were used for both samples to minimise selection bias. Quantitative and qualitative content analysis was performed, focusing on the variation in communication techniques, source credibility, video format, channel type, and persuasiveness between the two periods. Comparative statistics and thematic analysis informed the findings.

Previous Results

Before COVID-19, most anti-vaccine videos were lengthy (30–60 minutes) and often recorded at public congresses related to healthy living. Speakers used to be a doctor or a therapist specialised in non-conventional treatments. Videos are shown on public channels owned by companies.

Post-pandemic, Odysee videos against childhood immunisation became significantly shorter and more numerous, with a broader mix of formats (e.g., interviews, documentaries, videoconferences, and online interviews). While healthcare and alternative medicine professionals remained prominent, new actors, including journalists, entered the discourse.

Most channels are private. People curate and redistribute existing content. Cross-posting of videos among private channels increased content reach and repetition.

Conclusions

This analysis constitutes a component of a broader research initiative on decoding anti-vaccine video content and persuasive tactics in the context of childhood vaccination. The findings highlight the evolving nature of anti-vaccine communication and its adaptation to new digital platforms. Our first results allow us to drive into a 'parents'-centric perspective to manage the information disseminated on the internet. This information provides health professionals with tools to deal with parents' hesitancy.

Health professionals can leverage these insights to refine interventions, tailor communications that address parental concerns, and identify persuasive triggers used in online misinformation. Future strategies to promote immunisation should consider both the messaging techniques and the changing media environment, optimising approaches to counteract childhood vaccine hesitancy effectively in Spain.

IIC01 Memory, Culture, and Transnational Cultural Practices

PP 0089 Island memories: Exploring the intersection of local and digital memory practices

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This paper explores how cultural memory is constructed and transmitted across generations in small island contexts through the interplay of local heritage institutions and digital media platforms. The main research question guiding this study is: How do local heritage institutions and digital media platforms contribute to the construction and intergenerational transmission of cultural memory in island contexts, and what are the implications of combining analogue and digital memory practices for collective identity formation? The paper examines how analogue memory practices, such as exhibitions, oral history projects, and local museums, intersect with digital practices, and what this combination means for collective identity formation. The study focuses on the North Sea islands of Spiekeroog in Germany and Schiermonnikoog in the Netherlands. These islands function as small-scale lenses on broader social processes of remembering, where the limited number of actors, institutions, and stories makes memory work highly visible and socially embedded.

The study applies a mixed-methods design that combines exhibition analysis, digital ethnography, and media practices research. Institutional exhibitions, local museums, and community-based projects are analysed to examine how island histories and memories are mediated and made accessible to different generations. Particular attention is paid to media practices of collecting, contextualising, and presenting photographs, objects, and oral histories. The digital analysis focuses on Instagram posts, hashtags, and user interactions related to the two islands in order to trace how visual memory objects are created, shared, and circulated beyond the local context. In addition, the study examines the reuse of audiovisual materials from media archives and emerging AI-supported curation practices to understand how they support and reshape island memory practices.

Preliminary findings suggest that heritage institutions and community exhibitions operate as intergenerational spaces of memory transmission. On both islands, older residents contribute lived experience and contextual knowledge, while younger audiences engage with these narratives through exhibitions and mediated forms of storytelling. On Spiekeroog in particular, memory work relies on individual custodians who collect photographs, record oral histories, and provide narrative context to objects displayed in exhibitions and museums. These practices translate personal and family memories into shared public resources. Digital platforms extend these practices by enabling residents and visitors to create and circulate visual memory objects that connect island pasts to present-day experiences and translocal audiences.

The island context highlights how collective identity is sustained through ongoing memory practices rather than fixed historical narratives. With few institutions and limited archival infrastructures, remembering becomes a shared responsibility, and each story carries particular weight. By examining how analogue and digital practices are combined in these settings, the paper shows how islands act as microcosms of cultural memory, offering insight into wider challenges of preserving, mediating, and transmitting memory in contemporary societies shaped by both local heritage work and digital media practices.

Keywords

cultural memory; cultural communication; heritage institutions; intergenerational transmission; digital media; island studies; audiovisual archives

IIC01 Memory, Culture, and Transnational Cultural Practices

PP 0090 Learning from kin through documentaries and archival materials: Inuit online engagements with remediated cultural materials

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This paper examines how Inuit are remediating documentary films and archival materials to social media, many of them with a colonial background, thereby reinserting them into cultural ways of knowing by centering family and kinship relations.

Like many Indigenous groups, Inuit from Nunavut, in what is today Canada, are working to overcome ongoing colonial disruptions to the continuity of cultural knowledge. Projects aimed at revitalizing cultural knowledge are widely seen as key to bolstering Inuit identity, wellbeing, and economic success. In this context, Inuit and their allies increasingly build and maintain online cultural resources, such as social media channels, digital exhibits, and video repositories. When online media are brought in to support learning about cultural knowledge, then what are the associated practices by which Inuit mobilize culturally rooted ways of knowing and being when engaging with these media?

I discussed this question in interviews and digital heritage workshops with Inuit research collaborators in September and November 2025. These were part of a research project conducted in collaboration with Inuit students, educators, and Inuit Heritage Trust (IHT). One of the project's goals is to support IHT's efforts to develop an online platform for the digital

repatriation of material cultural belongings currently held in museums. To do that, this research seeks to understand and document already existing ways of culturally appropriate engagement with heritage online.

Inspired by the Shawn Wilson's Indigenous research principle of relational accountability, which implies that the relationships that form during research are as substantial to the research as question and results, the paper begins with a critical reflection on how the project developed in dialogue with the research collaborators before moving on to a discussion of how Inuit center family and kin relations when engaging with remediated archival materials and documentary films on social media. Research collaborators often did not see film snippets as intended to convey the film's narrative or perspective. Instead snippets were appreciated for featuring relatives as well as the specific sophisticated artistry- such as garments- and cultural practices- such as hunting techniques- that they depict. Circulating within the community, they were described as a source of pride in one's kin and an opportunity to learn from kin who were involved in the production of the films. Drawing on literature on Inuit pedagogy and anthropological film, the paper argues that Inuit are taking up the educational work of their Elders depicted in documentary films and archival materials by reinserting these media in community-based ways of knowing. Beyond reasserting visual sovereignty, then, this practice reinserts relational aesthetics into the materials and reorients them toward Inuit priorities.

IIC01 Memory, Culture, and Transnational Cultural Practices

PP 0091 Co-cultivating inhabitable commons: Independent bookstores in Chinese-speaking diasporas

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Resurgent independent bookstores have emerged as a significant site and medium for memory preservation and community building for immigrants and citizens. Scholarship has noted the role of independent bookstores in sustaining civic solidarity and activist resilience. However, the tension among frequent mobility, spatial-temporal uncertainty, and intensified internal political fragmentation and independent bookstores in search of sustainable survival in diasporic contexts has yet to be sufficiently researched. This study takes the case of independent bookstores founded by Chinese migrants (including immigrants from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) to explore their negotiation between market openness and political commitment as well as the cultivation of a transient but inhabitable commons. Drawing on Rancière's notion of the distribution of the sensible and Anderson's concept of affective atmospheres, this study proposes the term "co-cultivated sensory commons" to theorize independent bookstores as civic infrastructures of ambiguous affective atmospheres embedded in the logic of the marketplace. Bookstore owners as civic cultivators meticulously design sensory, temporal, and curatorial conditions to grow and sustain diasporic publics, rather than simply relying on the identity, political consensus, or institutional engagement of immigrant subjects.

Based on interviews with the operators of five Chinese independent bookstores located in the UK, Europe, and North America, digital ethnography of their social media, and grounded theory, this study compares different tactics of commons cultivation and articulates a symbiotic relationship between bookstore owners, the public, and spaces. Concretely, bookstore operators co-nurture diasporic spaces that are affectively and politically viable with readers and local urban environments through deliberate book selection, the creation of reading atmospheres, the curation of events, and membership systems. While the everyday operations of the different bookstores are not similar, they respectively absorb the economic, socio-political issues, and cultural nourishment of local societies to enable rooted and organic growth; build a refuge community for certain immigrant populations with the preservation of a sense of belonging and cultural memories; and connect the diasporic and non-diasporic audiences with reading and intellectual conversations to translate into an imagined future of a cohabitated life. Despite the persistent tension between market inclusion and political expression, independent bookstore operators aim to counteract the instability of dislocation and economic vulnerability by co-cultivating affective-atmospheric civic ecologies and publics. Thus, this study contributes to imagining the informal political possibilities of a sensible diasporic public sphere and publicness.

IIC01 Memory, Culture, and Transnational Cultural Practices

PP 0092 Digital transnationalism and intercultural family communication across shifting sociotechnical contexts

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Intercultural communication in transnational contexts is increasingly mediated by digital technologies that reshape how families negotiate culture, identity, belonging, and care across borders. Responding to the ECC 2026 theme "Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures," this paper examines digital transnationalism as a form of everyday intercultural communication embedded in unequal sociotechnical, linguistic, and political environments. It asks how digitally mediated family interactions both enable intercultural dialogue and reproduce power asymmetries linked to migration regimes, language policies, and digital infrastructures.

Drawing on qualitative interview data with 18 transnational families in Cyprus and Estonia, the study adopts an ecological and intercultural communication perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Baldassar, 2016; Cabalquinto, 2019) to analyse how multimodal communication practices—video calls, messaging apps, emojis, photographs, online education, and social media—mediate emotional presence, family cohesion, heritage-language transmission, and identity work across distance. Thematic analysis reveals how digital communication functions as a key site of intercultural meaning-making within families navigating multiple cultural repertoires and shifting positionalities.

The comparative design highlights how intercultural communication practices are shaped by context. In Estonia, a highly digitalised governance system positions digital communication as a structural requirement for participation in education, healthcare, and administration. This institutional digitalisation intensifies linguistic asymmetries, often positioning children as intercultural and digital brokers who mediate between family members, state institutions, and dominant language regimes. In Cyprus, where integration is more strongly grounded in interpersonal networks and diasporic communities, digital communication primarily supports emotional closeness, cultural continuity, and transnational care rather than institutional navigation. These contrasting contexts illustrate how intercultural encounters are not only interpersonal but also infrastructural, shaped by macro-level sociopolitical conditions.

Across both settings, families engage in complex forms of multiliteracy and multimodality to sustain intercultural relationships and negotiate belonging. Digital rituals such as shared meals via video calls, online religious practices, heritage-language lessons, and the circulation of images and voice messages function as symbolic resources for maintaining cultural memory and intergenerational solidarity. At the same time, unequal access to digital skills, language proficiency, and technological resources reveals persistent structural inequalities within and across families.

By centring migrants' voices, this paper challenges normative and Western-centric models of intercultural communication that privilege face-to-face interaction or national integration outcomes. It contributes to critical intercultural communication scholarship by conceptualising digital transnational family life as an ethically and politically situated communicative practice, where power, care, and identity are constantly renegotiated. The paper argues that understanding intercultural communication in a digitally mediated world requires attention to emotional labour, epistemic justice, and the everyday strategies through which marginalised actors navigate shifting global conditions.

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IIC02 Geopolitics, War, and Media

PP 0194 How peace is discursively constructed: A discourse-theoretical analysis of Russian and Ukrainian news agencies' coverage

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The Russian-Ukrainian war has far-reaching human, political, economic, and environmental consequences and is widely expected to remain protracted, with increasing militarization and fragile prospects for negotiated settlement (Lawrence et al., 2022; Hayoz & Stepanenko, 2024). The war has also generated intense discursive struggles, particularly in media, where meanings of war and peace are negotiated, justified, and contested (Hodges, 2013). While research has predominantly examined war discourses due to their omnipresence in public debate (Van der Linden & Licata, 2012), the discursive construction of peace remains largely under-researched (Möller & Shim, 2019). This gap is salient given the central role of news coverage as hegemonic information sources, especially within neo-authoritarian and semi-free media systems shaped by state power and wartime constraints (Becker, 2004; Boumans et al., 2018; Samahalska, 2023).

This study examines *how Russian and Ukrainian state-owned news agencies discursively construct peace in their English-language coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war.* The study employs Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA), grounded in Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory and its later developments (Carpentier, 2017; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). The empirical corpus consists of 495 English-language news releases, including 221 images, published by the Russian state-owned agency TASS and the Ukrainian state-owned agency Ukrinform during February 2025.

Our preliminary findings indicate a pronounced dominance of photo-negativistic articulations of peace, in which peace is defined primarily as the absence of war (Galtung, 1969; Webel, 2007). Peace is mainly defined through a strategic peace discourse that constructs peace as a fragile and temporary outcome of state interest-driven strategies rather than a normative, transformative ideal. Across both agencies, peace is constructed as a high-level, institutional, and state-led

process. Bottom-up, everyday, or civil society-oriented articulations of peace are largely absent, reinforcing a narrow, statist imaginary of peace.

Peace is also enacted through fluid and situational identity constructions of the rational, constructive peace-seeking "Us", alongside the evolving "Other". The "Other" is positioned along shifting "Enemy," "Aggressor," "Ally," and "Victim" roles, allowing for both the processes of Othering and strategic de-Othering, likely to facilitate pragmatic negotiations. This flexibility enables peace to be constructed as achievable without fully disarticulating antagonism, thereby maintaining the legitimacy of the ongoing militarization and securitization. Peace-seeking strategies are primarily articulated as intertwined diplomatic, military, and economic instruments. They are facilitated by enabling conditions such as strategic unity, decisive statescraft, and great-power gatekeeping over negotiation processes, and operationalized through methods of transactionality, pressure, enforcement, speed and methodical patience. Peace is thus ultimately justified through pragmatic aims, including state survival, balance of power, cost prevention, addressing root causes, and post-war recovery.

The dominance of the strategic peace discourse is likely shaped by the news logics of news agencies and marginalizes more autonomous articulations of peace related to social justice and social harmony. Given news agencies' agenda-setting power, these findings suggest that discursive constructions and understandings of peace remain closely aligned with hegemonic war logics. As a result, the democratic, emancipatory, and counter-hegemonic potential of peace discourses – central to long-term peacebuilding and participatory culture (Carpentier & Kejanlıoğlu, 2020) – remains largely untapped.

IIC02 Geopolitics, War, and Media

PP 0195 Russo-Chinese narrative alignment in international broadcasting: The case of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

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This paper examines narrative alignment between Russian and Chinese state-sponsored international broadcasters in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, situating this phenomenon within broader debates on authoritarian media cooperation, and the contestation of global information order (Dukalskis, 2021). Since the February 2022 declaration of a Sino-Russian "partnership without limits," scholars have questioned whether this geopolitical proximity has translated into coordinated or convergent mediated communication aimed at international audiences (e.g. Repnikova, 2022). Existing research has documented shared grievances against "Western" liberal hegemony and the promotion of multipolarity, yet systematic, longitudinal evidence on how such alignment operates in practice remains limited (Xu & Zhao, 2025).

Drawing on a mixed-methods design, the study analyses English-language video content produced by RT and CGTN and distributed via YouTube, Rumble and Odysee, including full subtitle transcripts. We compile a comprehensive corpus of all Ukraine-related videos across two one-year periods (January 2022 to January 2023 and July 2024 to July 2025), allowing us to capture both the initial phase of the war and a later period of geopolitical stabilisation. Using computational techniques, we identify the ten most prevalent narratives across the corpus and employ a large language model to classify videos accordingly. These classifications are manually validated, and the temporal evolution of narratives is plotted to assess convergence, divergence, and change over time. To contextualise these dynamics, we introduce a "control group" consisting of France 24, whose coverage, we posit, presents a perspective on the topic that is not embedded in Sino-Russian strategic alignment. To complement the computational analysis of the texts, we identify three critical events where narratives demonstrably converged or diverged across outlets, and we then perform in-depth qualitative and multimodal discourse analysis of videos published during these windows. This approach enables close examination of rhetorical strategies, visual framing, and justificatory logics at moments of heightened narrative salience.

Our findings point to a pattern of asymmetrical alignment. While RT and CGTN remain stylistically distinct, with RT favouring emotive and polarising rhetoric and CGTN adopting a more technocratic and ostensibly balanced tone, we observe a consistent unidirectional transfer of narratives from Russian to Chinese outlets. Specifically, CGTN increasingly amplifies and rationalises Russian-favoured frames concerning NATO's provocation, Ukraine's irresponsibility, and the legitimacy of a multipolar world order, often translating these claims into economic, diplomatic, or pragmatic registers designed to appeal to broader international audiences. No comparable evidence suggests a reverse flow of narratives from Chinese to Russian media. We argue that this pattern exemplifies a new phase of mediated cooperation among authoritarian states, characterised not by full narrative convergence but by selective strategic amplification. This sheds light on how global communication infrastructures contribute to the reproduction and legitimisation of alternative geopolitical orders beyond the West.

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IIC02 Geopolitics, War, and Media

PP 0196 The 'Great Game' of media and politics in Africa: How geopolitics and BRICS+ media intervention shape newsroom practices in sub-Saharan Africa - A comparative study in seven African countries

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While debates about the "de-Westernization" of communication studies have been ongoing for decades, the field has so far failed to capture the **profound implications of current geopolitical shifts for journalism and media systems worldwide**.

This paper addresses the absence of systematic knowledge on **how BRICS+ actors transform media ecosystems in sub-Saharan Africa** and beyond. Over the last decade, **China, Russia, the Gulf States, Iran, and BRICS+ applicant Türkiye, as well as Qatar,**have emerged as prominent players in African media development.

China complements **massive infrastructure investments** with **content partnerships** and journalism training (Li, 2024; Gallagher, 2025). Russia has opened its first pan-African **journalism training** center, in Namibia in September 2024 (Audinet, 2024). Iran, the Gulf monarchies, as well as Qatar and Türkiye have launched further initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., KAS, 2021).

Rhetorically, **these actors frame their engagement as an effort to liberate African journalism from "Western-centric narratives"** (Ezeru, 2021). Yet **case studies from Kenya demonstrate the opposite**: These interventions often seek to impose the geopolitical agendas of BRICS+ countries (Lacher, 2022) on local news coverage rather than enabling autonomous framing of international topics (Madrid-Morales et al., 2021; Umejei, 2018).

In parallel, the **abrupt withdrawal of USAID** from almost all programs in 2025 marks a watershed moment (GFMD, 2025). Its termination effectively **ended decades of U.S. "soft power" investments into media and journalism in the Global South** and the post-Soviet space (Lugo-Ocando, 2020). But also development assistance by most other Western countries shows a sharp decline (OECD, 2025).

Against this backdrop, this paper present first results from a **3-year foundation-funded research project**, started in September 2025. The project investigates how BRICS+ interventions reshape newsroom practices and professional norms (Waisbord, 2025) in fragile African media systems. The project employs a **most-different-systems design** to analyze BRICS+ media interventions across seven diverse sub-Saharan African countries: **Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda.** The study countries have been selected for their **variation in regime types, press freedom and media systems, colonial legacies, and exposure** to BRICS+ media strategies.

At ECREA 2026, we will present the results of a **comparative context-sensitive meta-analysis** (Card, 2015) in the African project countries, which will be followed by in-depth interviews with local media professionals and media managers in a second empirical step in 2027. **Results from our pilot desk study for Nigeria** show that China exerts the most systematic influence through content syndication (CGTN, Xinhua) and extensive journalism training programs that promote development-oriented and state-centric news frames. Russia complements this presence via digital outlets such as RT and Sputnik, as well as diplomatic briefings that foreground multipolar worldviews and anti-Western interpretations of global politics. But also South Africa operates as a regional hub advancing BRICS+ discourses on media sovereignty, while Brazil and India remain marginal, exerting only selective cultural or infrastructural media influence.

In our ECREA contribution, the African-European research team will present results for all seven study countries and **compare findings across systemic, organizational, professional, and individual levels of journalism** (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

IIC02 Geopolitics, War, and Media

PP 0197 To support or not to support: A framing analysis of the Lebanese media coverage of Hezbollah's 2023–2024 supportive war with Hamas against Israel

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Through a framing analysis of the Lebanese media coverage of Hezbollah's support for Hamas against Israel in 2023 and 2024, this study scrutinizes how media can strategically argue for or against entering a regional war to support an ally. The contemporary media environment led to a transnational diffusion of war content across traditional and digital media (Knüpfer & Entman, 2018). The 7th of October 2023 war exemplifies this change. After Hamas ignited the war in October 2023, its ally in the Iranian 'axis of resistance', Hezbollah, declared a supportive war against Israel. Accordingly, the

Lebanese media debated the necessity of this supportive war. In September 2024, Israel shifted its focus from Hamas to Hezbollah's front.

Building on the rich literature on media's (strategic) framing of conflicts (see seminal studies such as Hallin, 1986; Lee & Maslog, 2005, and the literature review of Knüpfer & Entman, 2018), this study contributes to the literature on the media (strategic) framing of supportive war in the transnational hybrid media system (Arafat & Harb, 2025). The websites of six Lebanese outlets are analyzed: *al-Manar, OTV, al-Jadeed, LBCI, Megaphone,* and *MTV.* The selected outlets differ significantly in their stance toward Hezbollah, ranging from total support (*al-Manar*) to total adversary (*MTV*). From each outlet, its coverage of the war's first month (from 7.10.2023 to 7.11.2023) and the month of escalation (from Israel's pager attack on 17.09.2024 to 17.10.2024) was collected. The summary of the news in the main news bulletin or the daily summary was collected from each outlet; hence, about 60 daily summaries were collected (n = 334). A quantitative framing analysis of the whole sample was conducted in which frames were coded as multi-item constructs based on Entman's (1993) framing elements (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and treatment). This quantitative method was followed by a qualitative framing analysis (Scheufele, 2003) of the articles published on the days of exceptional events with the highest news value, such as the pager attack and the assassination of Hassan Nasrallah.

The initial results of the mixed methods show that the pro-Hezbollah media, particularly *al-Manar* and *al-jadeed,* relied on Hamas' videos on social media to frame the axis of resistance as much stronger than Israel. Unsurprisingly, they focused on Israel's killing of civilians in Gaza. In contrast, anti-Hezbollah media, such as *MTV, LBCI,* and even to a lesser degree *Megaphone*, framed the conflict as a one between Iran and Israel, where Lebanon is sacrificed for Iran's interests. The central difference between the pro and anti-supportive war framing was not the moral depiction of Israel, as all the outlets framed Israel as an aggressor, but the power estimation. Our results show that in the current hybrid transnational media system, the media endorsing a supportive war focus on the content of their allies on the Internet to frame them as mighty. Conversely, the media against the war amplify its costs by framing the enemy as strong and the ally as selfish, exploiting the supporting actor in an immoral regional conflict.

IIC03 Journalism and Media in Challenging Contexts

PP 0313 Navigating exile in Germany: How home-country contexts shape journalistic practice

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This comparative study examines how the cultural and sociopolitical contexts of journalists' home countries shape their experiences and professional practices in exile in Germany. While Germany provides a common host-country setting, the study demonstrates that exile journalism cannot be understood without close attention to the historically specific trajectories of repression, professional cultures, and political conflict in the home countries from which journalists originate.

Theoretically, the study conceptualizes exile as a condition of political and professional in-betweenness (Arendt, 1943), in which journalistic roles, identities, and norms are renegotiated under conditions of displacement. Building on research on journalism in exile and diaspora journalism (Skjerdal, 2011; O'Loughlin & Schafraad, 2016; Porlezza & Arafat, 2022), the article approaches exile journalism as a distinct transnational mode of practice shaped by the interaction of macro-level contexts, meso-level organizational dynamics, and individual-level experiences. Particular attention is paid to how home-country media cultures, political cleavages, and repertoires of repression continue to structure journalistic work and self-perception in exile.

Empirically, the analysis draws on 50 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with journalists from Afghanistan, Belarus, Russia, Syria, and Turkey residing in Germany. Using a multi-level analytical framework, the study examines how macro-level conditions in the country of origin—such as the nature of the restrictive turn, patterns of political persecution, media system characteristics, and cultural understandings of journalism—interact with meso-level dynamics (media organizations and exile communities) and micro-level factors (personal situation, motivation, and professional role-conception) in the German context.

The preliminary findings reveal pronounced differences across national groups. Journalists from Syria and Afghanistan, shaped by experiences of war, regime collapse, and existential threats, often approach exile as a permanent rupture and articulate journalism primarily as moral witnessing or advocacy, yet frequently disengage from professional practice due to exhaustion, devaluation, and limited prospects. Turkish journalists' experiences are strongly influenced by long-standing political polarization and hybrid repression, resulting in fragmented exile communities that reproduce home-country divisions in Germany. Russian journalists, socialized in comparatively professionalized media environments but confronted with rapid authoritarian escalation, more often frame exile as provisional and continue journalistic work with a strong emphasis on professional autonomy, albeit under conditions of precarity and intensified competition.

Across all cases, the study shows that home-country contexts continue to structure exile by shaping expectations of return, orientations toward activism, patterns of community formation, and as well as their experiences in Germany. By systematically comparing journalists from different sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds within the same host country, the study

demonstrates that exile journalism is a relational and context-dependent practice, deeply embedded in the legacies of the countries journalists leave behind. The findings highlight the analytical value of integrating home-country contexts into research on exile journalism and point to the need for support measures that account for these differences.

IIC03 Journalism and Media in Challenging Contexts

PP 0314 Communicative function and journalistic role performance of poltical satire across cultural contexts.

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Political satire has increasingly established itself as a hybrid genre that blends entertainment, information, and political critique, occupying a contested space at the boundaries of journalism and popular culture. While a substantial body of research documents the democratic relevance of satirical news formats in the United States, comparative research across cultural and media-systemic contexts remains limited. This imbalance is largely attributable to the historical dominance of U.S. late-night satire within both the genre itself and the scholarly literature. As a result, it remains unclear to what extent established findings on political satire's communicative functions and journalistic behavior travel beyond the U.S. case. This study addresses this gap by offering a systematic cross-national comparison of weekly news satire in three distinct media systems: the United States (*Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*), Germany (*ZDF Magazin Royale*), and Austria (*Gute Nacht Österreich*). Building on theories of discursive integration and journalistic role performance (JRP), the study employs a Large Language Model–Assisted Content Analysis (LACA) to code 6,356 sentences from 30 main segments across the three programmes, analyzing thier communicative functions (humorous, informative, evaluative, and complex speech) and journalistic role performance, with particular attention given to the "comedic interlocutor" role as a genre-defining feature of satirical news. The LLM-assisted approach enables fine-grained, scalable analysis while maintaining transparency and reliability through validation against human coding. The findings reveal both shared genre characteristics and meaningful cross-national variation. All three programmes rely heavily on hybrid communicative strategies and consistently perform the comedic interlocutor role, underscoring political satire's transnational family resemblance. At the same time, distinct national patterns emerge. U.S. satire places stronger emphasis on civic education and mobilization, German satire foregrounds watchdog journalism and investigative critique, and Austrian satire leans more toward informative delivery with comparatively fewer evaluative or activist elements. Taken together, these results highlight the importance of media-systemic and cultural context in shaping satire's journalistic role performance. Beyond its substantive findings, the study also demonstrates the methodological viability of LLM-assisted content analysis for comparative research in journalism and political communication, offering a scalable tool for analyzing hybrid genres across linguistic and national boundaries.

IIC04 Identity, Migration, and Intercultural Lived Experiences

PP 0421 From Saporo ramen to Black hair salons: The banal construction of difference in urban spaces

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Drawing from racial and ethnic studies, critical nationalism studies, and urban studies, this study explores the symbolic construction of difference in and through cityscapes. Empirically focusing on the case of a multicultural urban center (Rotterdam, The Netherlands), this paper asks: How do commercial spaces in multicultural urban spaces articulate difference?

Under the impetus of Billig's banal nationalism argument, critical nationalism studies have foregrounded the mundane reproduction of the nation in everyday life (Fox & van Ginderachter, 2018). While research on nationalism and on racism tended to develop in separate disciplinary arenas (Rutland, 2022), the emergence of race as a social category has historically been interwoven with the emergence of nationalism (Zantedeschi, 2022). Literature about race, nationality and ethnicity in Europe points to the ambiguity and plasticity of these concepts that are covertly conflated at times (Lentin, 2020). While much scholarship has explored these concepts separately, this study looks at their (banal) entanglements to understand which meanings are stabilized, and how, when the notions of race, ethnicity and nationality are juxtaposed.

We draw from data collected during several datawalks undertaken by both researchers and study participants through Rotterdam in spring 2024 in the area of West Kruiskade, also known as 'China Town' in Rotterdam. These datawalks were part of a larger project exploring the racialization of space and the spatiality of race, generating data - photographs and recorded conversations – centered upon the perceived role of urban infrastructure in making race (in)visible. During these datawalks, the semiotic entanglement of race, nationality, ethnicity, and class, driven by commercial and urban planning logics, emerged inductively as crucial to place-making. In this study, we present an analysis of this semiotic entanglement by focusing on the visual presentation of three exemplary commercial places – an Asian restaurant, an expat shop, and a Black hair salon. Informed by semiotic and discourse analysis, we focus on the way in which the different elements of the shop front (i.e., shop name, logo, promotional text and illustrations, window displays) and the shop location (i.e., immediate surroundings) intersect and create a particular chain of signification through which difference is offered as an object of consumption for various imagined audiences.

Preliminary findings underline the tensions at play in, on the one hand, making race visible where elsewhere it is erased and, therefore, providing spaces of belonging (Joseph, 2014) and, on the other hand, doing so through a consumerism discourse that risks depoliticizing race, ethnicity and nationalism (see also hooks, 1992). Understanding the entanglement of these notions with one another and with commodification discourses offers relevant pointers to further apprehend how these notions may contribute to and/or impede conceptualizing (post-)capitalist cities (see Chatterton Pusey, 2020). Overall, these findings speak back to the different disciplines we draw on and that have typically foregrounded only race, only ethnicity or only nationalism by showing the transdisciplinary implications of exploring the interplay of these notions with one another and in and through everyday discursive and materialities urban realities.

IIC04 Identity, Migration, and Intercultural Lived Experiences

PP 0422 Intersectional identity in liminality: Narrative identity and transnational inequality in the case of asylum-seeker mothers in Hong Kong

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Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) has been extensively applied as a framework for examining marginalization, particularly in the case of women who face multiple layers of oppression. Although existing scholarship has expanded to include a broad range of identities - among which gender, race, and class are the most frequently discussed - current research often falls short of unpacking the complexities of context-identity interactions that produce or reinforce marginalization and shape the lived experiences of marginalized communities. This study argues that this application gap of intersectionality is especially evident in research on forced migrant women, whose lives are marked by *liminality* - a transitional condition in which legal status and social positions are constantly shifting and remain ambiguous across multiple sociocultural and political contexts (Marotta, 2025). Therefore, rather than piling up discussions of gender, race, and other identity categories, this study contends that it is necessary to recognize that the home and host societies these migrant women move through function as relationally entangled contexts that shape their experiences as women, as forced migrants, and as well as other social identities.

To map out these multi-contextual identity complexities, this study proposes a new analytical approach by integrating the *Narrative Identity* and the *Narrative Identity Structure Model* (Dunlop, 2017) with intersectionality, grounding the analysis in various self-aspects - that is, social roles situated in specific contexts - embedded within migrant women's life storytelling. Drawing on the thematic narrative analysis of narrative identity data from 14 asylum-seeker mothers in Hong Kong, this study demonstrates that these migrant mothers' liminal struggles extend beyond categorical identity thinking. Instead, marginalization emerges from a networked form of suppression shaped by relational, social, and personal identities that span from domestic to broader societal contexts. Eight self-aspects are identified in the narrative data: (1) mother; (2) asylum seeker; (3) daughter and female family member; (4) wife or female partner in Hong Kong; (5) religious woman; (6) former domestic helper; (7) woman from an underdeveloped region; and (8) woman of low or middle class. These self-aspects illustrate both the enduring influence of these women's home societies during the post-migration period and the necessity of attending to the domestic context, in which the family operates simultaneously as a site of support and oppression. Moreover, their liminality and marginalization are rooted in exploitative migrant labor structures and in the social differences they encounter along their journeys from labor-exporting or politically turbulent regions to Hong Kong. The case of asylum-seeker mothers in Hong Kong presented in this study calls for future migration scholarship to more closely examine how forced migrants' identities are manifested across contexts, and to recognize personal narratives and life storytelling as a voice-giving channel that positions participants at the center of the intersectionality-guided analytical process.

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IIC04 Identity, Migration, and Intercultural Lived Experiences

PP 0423 Withering away from 'westernormativity': Structures and subjectivities of heading toward the West and back again in Central and Eastern Europe

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Over the past decade, public debates in the Czech Republic have increasingly included hostile reactions to decolonial and antiracist agendas emerging from the West, such as Black Lives Matter or efforts to decolonise cultural institutions. These initiatives are often portrayed as culturally alien, patronising, or irrelevant to local historical experience. This paper

examines why and how such Western-originated emancipatory discourses are rejected in a postsocialist context that, after 1989, was strongly oriented toward Western liberal norms. It asks how this dismissive reception is shaped by postsocialist subjectivities, experiences of semi-peripheral subalternity, and shifting perceptions of East–West hierarchies.

The study is grounded in interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks from cultural studies, postsocialist studies, and postcolonial scholarship. We introduce the concept of westernormativity to describe the early post-1989 dominance of Western liberal democracy, market capitalism, and human-rights discourse as an uncontested normative horizon in Czech society. Drawing on theories of East–West hierarchy (Krastev, Zarycki, Melegh, Todorova, Slačálek), we conceptualise the recent rejection of decolonial agendas as part of a broader erosion of westernormativity. We further engage affect theory to understand how emotions such as irritation, resentment, fatigue, and anger shape popular responses to perceived liberal imperatives and pedagogical pressures.

Methodologically, the paper combines qualitative social media research with narrative interviewing. First, we compiled a corpus of Czech media coverage (2018–2022) addressing antiracist and decolonial topics and identified highly commented articles shared on Facebook. These articles were treated as "trigger points" that elicited affectively charged reactions. From the accompanying comment threads, we selected dismissive or derogatory comments and contacted their authors. In the second phase, we conducted fourteen in-depth narrative interviews with these commenters between November 2023 and February 2024. The interviews integrated biographical, semi-structured, and trace-based elements and were analysed using thematic and nominal coding with a focus on affect, geopolitical belonging, and postsocialist experience.

Our analysis shows that decolonial and antiracist agendas function less as substantive issues and more as symbolic proxies for broader sociopolitical frustrations. Decolonial discourse is perceived as part of an intrusive Western liberal pedagogy rather than as a locally relevant moral project. Anti-"woke" expression subsequently operates as a form of reversed pressure and symbolic dissent, often drawing on memories of socialist authoritarianism. Respondents articulate a strong sense of postsocialist subalternity, shaped by lived experiences of East–West hierarchy and imitation. Emotional responses to decolonial agendas are dominated by irritation, resentment, and a desire to resist perceived moral coercion.

The rejection of decoloniality reflects a broader shift from post-1989 westophilia toward ambivalent or openly westophobic orientations. Together, these findings contribute to understanding how postsocialist affective histories co-shape contemporary culture wars in Central and Eastern Europe.

IIC04 Identity, Migration, and Intercultural Lived Experiences

PP 0424 Between 'Us' and 'Them': Representing Roma communities in Czech and Slovak television news

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This paper presents a research-in-progress project examining the media representation of the Roma minority in television news in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, with particular attention to the role of public service media in shaping narratives of ethnicity and cultural difference. Focusing on both public broadcasters (STVR, Czech Television) and major commercial stations (Markíza, TV JOJ, TV Nova, TV Prima), the project investigates how news discourse constructs Roma communities as social actors and how these constructions vary across two closely related Central European countries.

The study is theoretically grounded in critical theories of media representation and news discourse. It draws on Stuart Hall's concept of representation as a meaning-making practice, van Dijk's critical discourse analysis of ethnicity and new(s) racism based in othering. These frameworks enable an examination of how ethnic difference is discursively produced, normalized, and circulated through routine journalistic practices, as well as how symbolic distinctions between "us" and "them" are sustained in everyday news narratives. Particular attention is paid to the normative expectations placed on public service media regarding mainly social responsibility and emphasis on compliance with legislative requirements of objectivity, balance, and impartiality.

Methodologically, the project combines quantitative content analysis with qualitative discourse and semiotic analysis of selected television news programmes. These media analyses are complemented by in-depth interviews with journalists, editors, and news producers, alongside interviews with representatives of Roma communities, in order to connect representational practices with both production logics and lived experiences of mediated visibility. The paper outlines preliminary observations and illustrative case studies based on available data from the year 2026, specifically the case of New Year´s Eve celebrations in a Roma settlement. In addition, the project adopts a diachronic perspective by comparing contemporary representations with selected public service news coverage from 2015, for an assessment of continuity and change in dominant representational patterns over time.

The project proceeds from the assumption that media representations play a central role in shaping perceptions of ethnic minorities and in reproducing symbolic hierarchies in society. It hypothesizes that recurrent narrative structures, used visuals, and framing tend to reinforce cultural otherness and negative connotations associated with Roma communities, which are still significantly reported by public opinion research in both countries. The project seeks to contribute to critical

discussions on media responsibility and to formulate empirically grounded recommendations supporting more inclusive and reflexive journalistic practices.

IIC04 Identity, Migration, and Intercultural Lived Experiences

PP 0425 Building confidence in multilingual groups: Student experiences from a short-term mobility program within Higher Education

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The recent waves of political and economic instability, coupled with the global pandemic, have highlighted just how deeply interconnected the world has become—an interconnectedness that is clearly reflected in the operations of higher education (HE) institutions. Within Europe, policymakers increasingly urge higher education institutions (HEIs) to cultivate students' internationalization competences through initiatives such as the European Universities Initiative and the Erasmus+ program. Yet this push toward internationalization extends far beyond Europe. A global survey of 907 HEIs across 126 countries indicates that internationalization has become a worldwide trend. Institutions are now expected to equip students to act as "global citizens" who can collaborate effectively in a world that is both highly connected and marked by uncertainty.

For many students, this expanding internationalization often translates into studying in English, even as numerous scholars argue that the linguistic complexities of higher education deserve far more attention. Despite the extensive research on internationalization from diverse thematic and analytical perspectives, the role of multilingualism and multilingual communication remains relatively underexplored—especially from the viewpoint of students themselves.

There is a growing call for ethical and responsible approaches to internationalization—approaches that, for instance, ensure educational environments are designed to support the needs of marginalized students. Many scholars advocate for institutions to assume greater responsibility in fostering culturally inclusive practices. In line with Burke (2025), we recognize the urgent need to critically examine linguistic hierarchies in academia and to engage more meaningfully with the linguistic repertoires of multilingual students.

The ongoing push toward internationalization in higher education (HE) is often experienced by both teachers and students as a source of turbulence in their daily teaching and learning, bringing issues of equity and participation to the forefront. Students, in particular, frequently report heightened anxiety and stress when studying in multilingual settings or in a language other than their first language (L1).

In this presentation we present a qualitative study that investigates the experiences of students working in international groups during a short-term mobility program at a Finnish university. Using reflective papers from 15 students and recordings of four group meetings, the study examines how students perceived their confidence and learning in a multilingual environment, as well as how they employed multilingual practices during group discussions. While students noted that becoming aware of multilingual communication encouraged them to reflect on inequalities within diverse groups, actual multilingual practices were less evident in their interactions. The findings indicate that students' learning and sense of confidence were strongly shaped by their relationships with peers. The study highlights the need to further examine and theorize communication competence and confidence as contextual and co-constructed phenomena.

IIC05 Inequalities, Activism, and Social Justice Communication

PP 0528 Structural inequalities in internet access: Digital presence and barriers encountered by people experiencing homelessness

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The internet, as well as digital presence, has long been linked to community, participation, and the creation of human connections. Nonetheless, this engagement can presuppose users' ability to overcome limitations, inequalities, and barriers associated with the use of digital media. These conditions then divide users into groups with different access to such networks (Castells, 2009). Unhoused people, being one such disadvantaged group, collaborated with university students in open action discussions through participatory action research (PAR), conducted in Brno, Czech Republic.

The project was designed as an open-ended agenda, inviting participants into a dialogue in which the themes of discussion were brought to the foreground by the people experiencing homelessness themselves. This made it possible to identify the key issues they experience when attempting to engage in online environments. Their responses were recorded during six open action group discussions and were examined through thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring patterns as well as shared experiences.

The structural barriers identified in this study form a sequential continuum, ranging from material precarity, through functional limitations and towards institutional exclusion. The first overarching theme of material precarity did not include only the financial liability associated with acquiring a digital device, such as a mobile phone, but predominantly focused

on theft. Participants described the theft of mobile devices as a pervasive and recurring issue among people experiencing homelessness.

The material dimension was closely intertwined with the second theme of functional limitations. Due to limited financial resources, participants frequently relied on prepaid mobile data plans, which were often exhausted quickly, compelling them to seek access to free Wi-Fi networks. However, these access-providing spaces were described as offering unreliable and constrained functionality. Participants reported recurrent issues related to slow network performance, websites crashing due to high user congestion, and the necessity to repeatedly navigate complex login interfaces in order to reconnect to the same network.

These functional limitations involving time-prolonging conditions further intersect with the third theme of institutional exclusion. Participants observed that the extended time required to access the internet in public locations frequently exposed them to increased surveillance and policing. They stated that this often resulted in their eviction from these spaces based on their appearance. Moreover, in locations that initially enabled participants to mitigate some of their digital barriers, which included not only Wi-Fi spots but also electrical outlets, such facilities were subsequently restricted or removed. This process effectively instituted forms of gatekeeping around digital access. In response to repeated exclusion, participants reported deliberately avoiding heavily monitored spaces, a strategy that further intensified their social and spatial isolation.

By analysing these main themes, the paper demonstrates structural barriers to digital participation among people experiencing homelessness as not isolated, but cumulative and structurally produced. Such results emphasise how access to the internet is embedded in broader social, economic, and spatial conditions (Helsper, 2021) that systematically disadvantage unhoused populations. Understanding digital exclusion in this way offers a basis for developing inclusive digital policies that address the structural conditions under which digital participation becomes more accessible.

IIC05 Inequalities, Activism, and Social Justice Communication

PP 0529 Communicative practices of the Brazilian agroecology movement: Ancestrality, joy, and care in 'reforesting' the world

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While media narratives of ecological crises offer a widespread sentiment of despair and paralysis, several collectives have been working outside the spotlight of Western(ized) realms to recreate eco-social connection, community and care. In Brazil, the agroecology movement has been offering a powerful counter-narrative to the "end of the world" tale through its communicative practices rooted in ancestrality, joy/celebration, and reaffirmation of the commons. In this paper, I explore how agroecology in Brazil, beyond being a sustainable mode of food production, constitutes a social movement and a communicative field that challenges disconnection, apathy, fear, and ecological grief by fostering embodied, collective, insurgent and interspecies forms of care. Drawing on Indigenous and Afro-diasporic epistemologies, I analyze how movement's *agrifood* practices - such as garden classes, communal cooking, collective food-growing, talk circles, and feasts – appear as communicative practices that prefigure new (agrifood) futures.

Inspired by Brazilian philosopher Ailton Krenak's assertion that "the future is ancestral" (2020), Muniz Sodré's conceptualization of the entity *Exú* as a communicative category (2017), and Geni Nuñez ideas around "reforestation of the imaginary" (2017, 2021), among other emergent scholars, I argue that agroecology's communication practices operate through relationality and messiness, challenging hegemonic, linear, and necropolitical narratives of progress. Through its rituals, diverse movement actors construct networks of care that dissolve the human-nonhuman binary, repositioning nature/culture as an active communicative agent. Thus, they disrupt the crisis-driven framing of environmental discourse, "composting" despair into radical práxis.

By situating agroecology within post-colonial and post-human communication frameworks, the paper highlights its potential to reframe environmental/climate and other "polycrisis" not as endpoints, but as cracks from which collective coexistence and eco-social transformation are flourishing. It aligns itself with broader decolonial movements that envision futures not predicated on extraction, exploitation and destruction, but on concrete interventions based on reciprocity, diversity and mutual care. Agroecology's communicative dimensions thus serve as a vital lens for thinking a planet beyond the Western paradigm, offering possible paths toward regenerative, "reforested" worlds.

IIC05 Inequalities, Activism, and Social Justice Communication

PP 0530 #GiveCredit as intercultural digital activism contesting traditional textile appropriation in global fashion

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Cultural appropriation in global fashion has become a critical field of debate, raising ethical, economic, and intercultural concerns in an increasingly digitized and interconnected world. The #GiveCredit campaign-initiated by the Romanian cultural platform La Blouse Roumaine-provides a relevant case study for examining how digital activism challenges asymmetrical

power relations in cultural production and questions the boundaries between inspiration, appropriation, and intellectual property. This research situates the campaign within the broader debates on cultural appropriation, digital participation, and ethical accountability in the creative industries.

While previous studies have documented numerous cases of textile plagiarism and misappropriation by major fashion brands (Sadaba et al., 2020; Jankowska & Sorokowska, 2023; Turok, 2021), Romanian examples have been largely absent from global mappings of cultural exploitation. Between 2012 and 2019, over forty cases of textile plagiarism were recorded globally (Turok, 2021), yet the Romanian "*ia*"-a traditional hand-embroidered blouse symbolizing local heritage and identity- only entered the international conversation through the Give Credit campaign launched in 2017. Using hashtags such as #GiveCredit, #RespectOrigins, and #SupportCommunities, La Blouse Roumaine built a visual counter-narrative on social media, juxtaposing images of luxury fashion items from Dior, Louis Vuitton, Tory Burch, Valentino, and Mango with authentic Romanian garments from museum archives and artisan collections.

This research explores how La Blouse Roumaine redefines intercultural communication by transforming social media into a space of transnational dialogue and resistance. Through a qualitative content analysis of Instagram posts and user interactions (2017–2023), the study identifies recurrent themes such as authenticity versus imitation, heritage as shared responsibility, community-based authorship, and the ethics of inspiration. The findings reveal how La Blouse Roumaine successfully mobilized a dispersed digital audience into a cohesive advocacy network that acts as a "cultural watchdog," exposing appropriation while simultaneously educating global publics about intangible cultural heritage. The campaign exemplifies how intercultural encounters unfold in digital environments, as online spaces become arenas of negotiation between Western fashion systems and Eastern European cultural producers historically marginalized in global creative hierarchies (Kaneva & Popescu, 2011). The Give Credit movement also challenges neoliberal narratives of national branding that commodify identity for global visibility (Brown, 1998; Turok, 2021), reclaiming instead an ethics of reciprocity and acknowledgment rooted in local craftsmanship and collective authorship.

By situating La Blouse Roumaine within the dynamics of "call-out culture" (Gerrie, 2019) and digital resistance (Corradini, 2024), this paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how online activism can foster epistemic justice and reshape intercultural power relations in the creative industries. It argues that campaigns like #GiveCredit mark a paradigmatic shift in how cultural dialogue occurs-no longer mediated solely by institutions or brands, but co-created by communities asserting ownership over their narratives.

Ultimately, this study illuminates how grassroots digital activism from Eastern Europe not only contests cultural extraction but also reimagines the paths, connections, and futures of intercultural communication in the era of algorithmic visibility, global fashion flows, and the search for ethical cultural exchange.

IIC05 Inequalities, Activism, and Social Justice Communication

PP 0531 Hybridization or homogenization? Saudi women fashion entrepreneurs as intercultural mediators on Instagram

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This paper examines how influential Saudi women fashion entrepreneurs negotiate cultural identity on Instagram within the context of global branding and advertising practices. As digital platforms intensify transnational cultural flows, scholarly debates continue over whether globalization promotes cultural homogenization or enables hybrid identity formations. Positioned within International and Intercultural Communication research, this study asks: How do Saudi women fashion entrepreneurs balance cultural heritage with global marketing logics in Instagram advertising content, and what forms of intercultural negotiation emerge? The study employs a qualitative content analysis of Instagram posts and reels produced by six influential Saudi women fashion entrepreneurs between 2022 and 2025. The analysis focuses on visual representation, captions, and branded advertising content, examining how fashion, self-presentation, and commercial collaborations function as sites of intercultural meaning-making. By analyzing recurring patterns in dress practices, aesthetic choices, brand localization strategies, and cultural references, the study explores how global fashion narratives are adapted, negotiated, or reinterpreted within the Saudi context. Findings reveal three interconnected patterns. First, fashion emerges as a cultural product delivered through advertising, where global brand campaigns are selectively localized to align with Saudi cultural values, modesty norms, and national identity markers. Rather than reproducing standardized global marketing scripts, influencers actively adapt visual and textual elements to maintain cultural legitimacy. Second, fashion functions as a tool of cultural storytelling through which Saudi women entrepreneurs challenge stereotypical or negative representations of Saudi women. Through curated content, they present modern Saudi femininity as entrepreneurial, confident, and globally engaged while remaining rooted in cultural continuity. Third, the growing global interest in the Saudi market positions these women as key intermediaries who bridge international brands and local audiences, simultaneously promoting Saudi fashion and culture on a global stage. Overall, the findings suggest that intercultural communication in this context is characterized by selective hybridization rather than cultural homogenization. Saudi women fashion entrepreneurs do not simply adopt Western fashion or branding norms; instead, they act as intercultural mediators who translate global commercial culture into locally meaningful forms. By foregrounding a non-Western, platform-based entrepreneurial context, this paper

contributes to intercultural communication scholarship by demonstrating how digital advertising spaces become arenas of cultural negotiation, agency, and identity transformation under conditions of globalization.

IIC06 Digital Media, Platforms, and Political Participation

PP 0739 Manufacturing moral panic: How local incidents fuel populist mobilisation – A qualitative network discourse analysis of Germany and Malaysia

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This paper presents a comparative investigation of polarised media discourses and their political instrumentalisation in Germany and Malaysia – two countries characterised by rising populist sentiments, multi-ethnic social tensions, and a shift toward conservative-right political narratives. Adopting a cross-national, relational perspective, the study examines how localised incidents escalate into national populist panics. It focuses on the "Berlin Public Pool Riots" in Germany and the "KK Mart Halal Mockery" in Malaysia, analysing how these events triggered moralised and polarising debates that transformed isolated occurrences into platforms for populist mobilisation and identity politics.

Despite profound structural differences between the two countries, both cases reveal convergent discursive dynamics. Following a Most Different Systems – Similar Outcomes research design, the analysis demonstrates how single incidents are absorbed into broader narratives of cultural threat, producing high-stakes moral conflicts in which social groups are positioned as fundamentally incompatible. In Germany, conservative and far-right actors – most prominently the AfD – mobilise fears surrounding youth violence and migration by framing public pool incidents as evidence of a broader breakdown of social order. Media narratives frequently portray refugees and migrants as existential threats, thereby normalising exclusionary interpretations. These discursive dynamics coincide with tangible political consequences, including the AfD's rise to become the second-largest party in the 2025 Bundestag elections (20.6% of seats) and a marked increase in xenophobic violence.

In Malaysia, incidents such as the KK Mart sock scandal – where socks bearing the word "Allah" were sold – are mobilised by Malay-Muslim political elites to intensify ethnic and religious divisions. Within a multilingual and segmented media environment, such events are framed as moral transgressions against Islam, casting Chinese non-Muslims as disrespectful or morally deviant. These dynamics align with the broader "Green Wave," through which the PN coalition strategically mobilises ethnic-religious grievances. In both contexts, media narratives converge in constructing the nation as under siege, legitimizing calls for stricter control, exclusionary policies, and strong leadership.

The study is grounded in moral panic theory (Cohen, 1972; Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 2009) and extends it by integrating contemporary research on modern hate propaganda and populist mobilization frameworks (e.g. hate spin) to analyse mechanisms of discursive polarization (Brüggemann & Meyer, 2023). We argue that populist actors deliberately exploit moments of social uncertainty and perceived anomie to manufacture polarized moral panics. Through emotionally charged narratives, claims of victimhood, and "us versus them" framing, local incidents are reframed as existential threats to national identity, public order, or sacred values. These dynamics are amplified by media logics shaped by digital attention economies and platform-driven outrage.

Methodologically, the study advances qualitative discourse analysis by combining inductive qualitative network analysis (QNA) with discourse network analysis (DNA; Leifeld, 2017). This relational, qualitative mapping approach allows us to remain sensitive to cultural and contextual asymmetries.

The findings show that polarized moral panics follow a self-reinforcing cycle: discursive moralization deepens perceived social anomie, increases receptivity to populist leadership, and further intensifies polarization. Media do not merely reflect these dynamics but actively structure them by amplifying marginal incidents and privileging moral binaries over contextualized reporting.

IIC06 Digital Media, Platforms, and Political Participation

PP 0740 Live-streaming platforms, celebrity influencers, voter political participation in the Czech's 2023 Presidential election: A text mining study of media discourses, social media sentiment analysis, and voters' reflective narratives

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Introduction

Livestreaming platforms have emerged as important players in the streaming media ecosystem, in which real-time audio and video are broadcast via social media (Burroughs 2015), mobile (Garcia-Pineda et al., 2018), and video game (Johnson & Woodcock 2019,; Ruberg et al., 2019) technologies. This study examined the rise of live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers in the Czech Republic to study their implications for political campaign activities and effectiveness. Situated in

the context of the Czech Presidential Election in January 2023. This mixed-method study employed a text mining approach of media discourse analysis, opinion mining of public sentiment on social media, and voters' reflective narratives on their political participation behaviors. The study was based on an integrated framework of influencer marketing and voters' political participation behavior literature to address these crucial phenomena by empirically testing the relationships of study variables derived from this theoretical framework. The objectives of the study are as follows: 1) to provide an overview and assessment of these increasingly important tools for various political campaign activities in the Czech Republic; 2) to evaluate the roles of the live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers in the Czech 2023 Presidential Election as an example by collecting media discourse, social media sentiment, and voters' reflective/post-election narratives data to explore the relationships among live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers, media framing and social media sentiment, and voter political participation behaviors.

Objectives of the Study

Findings from this study will provide communication scholars with a more thorough understanding of the roles of live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers in the Czech Republic. Past political communication research has empirically proven the substantial effects of new media on the effectiveness of political campaigns (Owen, 2018). The recent emergence of live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers offers scholars an excellent opportunity to investigate the impact of celebrity influencers on voter political participation. Academic research on live-streaming platforms in political communication has been sparse. Studies on live-streaming influencers as a source of persuasion in political campaigns are even rarer in the setting of the Czech Republic.

This study also addressed a significant yet less investigated trend with a growing number of Gen Z voters who rely on live-streaming platforms and celebrity influencers to make political decisions (Citarella, 2021). Most extant research has examined social media celebrities as a source of influence that affects consumer behaviors (Hughes et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2020). Our study filled this research gap by focusing on live-streaming influencers in political campaigns by examining the relationships between live-streaming influencers and voter political participation.

This study would make significant methodological contributions by applying a computational text mining technique to analyze media discourses, social media sentiment, and voters' reflective narratives about the 2023 Presidential Election in the Czech Republic. It could offer an innovative approach to understanding voter political participation through a lens of media framing and social media sentiment data. Methodologically speaking, the extracted insights from mining mainstream and social media discourses will provide better interpretive foundations.

IIC06 Digital Media, Platforms, and Political Participation

PP 0741 Negotiating Europe online: Platformed publics challenging power asymmetries in the EU-BiH intercultural communication

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Digital platforms have become pivotal arenas for cultural diplomacy, identity construction, and citizen participation (Carta & Higgott, 2020; Cull, 2019; JRC, 2024; Somers, 1994), particularly within the evolving supranational European social space (Balibar, 2016). This study investigates the dynamics of platformed publics within a multi-scalar international communicative ecosystem, focusing on the European Union's (EU) digital communication at central and local levels, alongside Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) national and sub-state actors during the country's attainment of EU candidate status.

Theoretically, the paper draws on the concept of the platform society (van Dijck et al., 2018) and adopts post-Western perspectives (Bhambra, 2023) to frame EU–BiH relations and online public opinion as embedded in cultural, historical, geopolitical, and identitarian dynamics. In this configuration, post-socialist and post-war societies such the Balkans (Todorova 1997; 2018) are often positioned as subaltern (Imre, 2014) or perpetual learners in processes of cultural translation (Buden, 2006) that mask enduring structural power asymmetries.

The study examines how platformed publics engage with EU-BiH official narratives on social media during two key moments: the granting of EU candidate status (2022) and the Europe Day celebrations (2023). Methodologically, a preliminary mapping identified the main public actors involved in these intercultural communication processes, including EU bodies (European Council, Commission, Parliament, EU in BiH, Europe House) and BiH national and sub-state institutions (Office of the High Representative, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for European Integration, Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska). A sample of 191 posts (out of 1,792) published on X and Instagram was selected based on two criteria: (1) explicit references to the EU accession process and (2) symbolic constructions of European belonging. For each post, the six most visible user comments were qualitatively coded to analyse public attitudes toward the "West" and the EU-BiH relationship.

Findings show that citizen responses are predominantly negative and mildly polarised. Public engagement frequently expresses distrust in institutions, political disillusionment, incivility, and symbolic opposition to Western hegemonic narratives. Platformed publics often accuse the EU of hypocrisy, neocolonialism, and treating BiH as a subordinate geopolitical

subject, mobilising historical trauma and, at times, conspiratorial frames. Visual and affective practices play a central role: provocative memes, emojis, and war-related references transform intercultural communication into a contested terrain around Eurocentric ideas of Europeanness. Despite outreach efforts, engagement remains limited, with many posts receiving few comments, reflecting both platform affordances and the constraints of top-down communication. The Office of the High Representative, a supranational-local authority imposed through the Dayton Agreement, emerges as a key site of decolonial contestation. Transnational traces- comments in German, Swedish, Albanian, and Slovenian- point to diasporic publics negotiating Europe from multiple positionalities.

Overall, the study shows that on digital platforms publics do not passively receive EU-related content: they recontextualise it through memory, irony, and affect, amplifying contestation rather than dialogue, opening future shifts and reflections over cultural and communication processes as symbolic repositories steeped in history, socio-technical cultural worlds, economic models and collective memory processes (Bartoletti 2011; Boccia Artieri et al. 2023; Couldry, Mejias 2019).

IIC06 Digital Media, Platforms, and Political Participation

PP 0742 A cross-cultural analysis of user responses to social media advertising in China and Spain

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Social media advertising (SMA) has become widespread across the globe. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds may exhibit distinct responses to SMA. Examining the commonalities and differences in how audiences from various countries respond to social media advertising is essential for understanding the moderating role of culture and for informing the application of differentiated strategies in SMA.

Combined with Ducoffe's Web Advertising model, Theory of Planned Behavior, the theoretical model of SMA impact on Consumers' attitude, engagement, and Purchase intention and hypothesis have been constructed. The survey was conducted with Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis and MGA analysis of 417 questionnaires between Spain and China to compare the relationships of SMA and user response and gain a deep understanding of how culture affects users' responses to SMA, based on 2 types of SM (ins VS Rednote; TikTok VS Douyin) .

The SEM analysis identified several consistent relationships in both samples. Information (IN) and Social Interaction (SI) were positively related to Attitude toward SMA (AT), supporting the universal importance of utility and connectivity. Furthermore, a positive Attitude (AT) was found to be a significant predictor of user Engagement (ENG). Regarding the final behavioral outcome, Social Norms (SN), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), and Engagement (ENG) all showed significant correlations with Purchase Intention (PI) in both countries. However, the drivers of a positive Attitude (AT) toward SMA, varied significantly between the two cultures. In the Chinese sample, Entertainment (EN) and Credibility (CR) positively predicted AT. This indicates that Chinese consumers' attitudes are positively shaped when SMA provides not only useful information and social features but also enjoyable and trustworthy content. Conversely, Irritation (IR) was not a significant predictor of AT in China. In the Spanish sample, a different pattern was observed. While IN and SI remained positive drivers, Credibility (CR) and Entertainment (EN) were not statistically significant. Instead, Irritation (IR) was a significant negative predictor. This suggests that Spanish consumers' attitudes are more sensitive to personalized relevance and are adversely affected by perceived irritations in SMA, while entertainment value and general credibility play a less decisive role. MGA analysis indicated that the attitude->engagement path was significantly different statistically between China and Spain. Other paths (IN-> AT, EN>AT, IR->AT, SI-> AT, CR-> AT, SN->PI, PBC->PI, ENG->PI) were not statistically significant.

This study fills the gap in comparative research that combines the two theories and offers practical implications for international marketing and global advertising communication across culturally distinct markets. Providing useful information and social interaction triggers in SMA is crucial to affect users' attitude, no matter cultural contexts. In addition, irritation has a negative relationship with AT in Spain, so marketers should avoid this to enhance user experience and trust.

ICS01 Interpersonal Questions of Identity, Culture, and Agency

PP 0755 Theory of motivated information management: A narrative review

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Since its initial introduction in 2004, the theory of motivated information management (TMIM; Afifi & Weiner, 2004) has been widely employed to explain how individuals experience, interpret, and respond to uncertainty in interpersonal contexts and beyond. At its core, TMIM conceptualizes the mechanism through which uncertainty discrepancy motivates information management decisions. Specifically, individuals assess the discrepancy between their desired and actual levels of uncertainty, evaluate the emotional and efficacy-related consequences of addressing that discrepancy, and ultimately decide whether and how to seek, avoid, or cognitively reframe information. Over the past two decades, TMIM has become a prominent theoretical framework for examining information management processes across a broad range of applied communication domains, including family communication, health communication, and discussions of sensitive or stigmatized topics in close relationships.

Empirical research grounded in TMIM has demonstrated substantial explanatory and predictive utility. Studies have shown consistent support for the theory's central propositions, particularly the role of uncertainty discrepancy in shaping emotional responses, outcome assessments, and information management strategies. TMIM has been used to examine communication surrounding topics such as illness disclosure, genetic testing, sexual health, organ donation, relational uncertainty, and end-of-life decision-making, among others. Recent meta-analytical work by Kuang and Wilson (2021) synthesized findings from nearly two decades of TMIM research, offering robust quantitative evidence for the associations among core TMIM constructs and identifying theoretical extensions and boundary conditions. This synthesis also underscored the methodological approaches adopted in the TMIM literature, including cross-sectional surveys, longitudinal designs, and experimental studies.

Despite its extensive application, TMIM scholarship has largely been developed and tested within WEIRD (White, educated, industrialized, rich, democratic) populations. As a result, the theory's cultural assumptions, contextual boundaries, and global applicability remain underexamined. Communication processes related to uncertainty, efficacy, emotion, and information management are deeply embedded in sociocultural norms, relational expectations, and structural constraints, all of which may differ substantially across cultural contexts. For example, collectivistic orientations, power distance, relational obligation, and culturally specific emotion norms may alter how individuals perceive uncertainty discrepancy, evaluate potential outcomes, or decide on information-seeking and avoidance behaviors.

In this manuscript, we first provide an overview of TMIM's theoretical foundations and key propositions. We then review contemporary applications of the theory, with particular attention to studies conducted in non-WEIRD contexts, including research in East Asia, the Global South, and culturally diverse communities. Through this review, we highlight emerging patterns, conceptual challenges, and methodological innovations that extend or complicate TMIM's original assumptions. Finally, we discuss critical considerations for advancing TMIM in international and culturally diverse settings, including the need to incorporate culturally grounded constructs, attend to structural and relational constraints on information management, and adopt comparative and mixed-methods research designs. By foregrounding cultural diversity and global applicability, this paper aims to contribute to the continued development of TMIM as a theoretically robust and culturally responsive framework for understanding motivated information management across contexts.

ICS01 Interpersonal Questions of Identity, Culture, and Agency

PP 0756 Being seen without a watcher: Discursive self-regulation in anonymous digital interpersonal communication

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Digital interpersonal communication is increasingly shaped by a paradoxical condition: individuals communicate under conditions of anonymity while simultaneously experiencing a strong sense of being seen, evaluated, or misunderstood. This study examines how this internalized sense of visibility manifests itself discursively in everyday digital interpersonal interaction, focusing on anonymous confession practices. Drawing on Communication Privacy Management Theory (Petronio), the study conceptualizes online confessional discourse not as spontaneous self-disclosure but as a process of negotiated boundary management. Individuals do not simply "confess"; they actively regulate what to reveal, how much to reveal, and under which imagined conditions of audience reception. Uncertainty Management Theory (Brashers) is used as a secondary framework to illuminate how communicative uncertainty—particularly moral, social, and interpretive uncertainty—motivates these discursive strategies. The empirical material consists of six selected posts from the r/Confessions subreddit on Reddit, sampled across three consecutive years (2023–2025). Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative discourse analysis focusing on meta-communicative markers within interpersonal language. The analysis examines expressions of hesitation, self-censorship, anticipated judgment, and boundary negotiation embedded in the

posts. Rather than treating confessional content itself as the primary object of analysis, the study focuses on how speakers linguistically regulate their communicative acts prior to and during disclosure. The findings indicate that even in environments characterized by anonymity and lack of direct surveillance, individuals reproduce a communicative discipline shaped by imagined observation. Phrases expressing doubt, revision, deletion, and concern about interpretation reveal a form of "self-surveillance" embedded within interpersonal language. Over time, the analysis also suggests a subtle normalization of this discursive self-regulation, pointing to a shift from explicit anxiety toward routinized communicative caution. By situating anonymous digital confessions within interpersonal communication theory, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on digital interaction, privacy management, and the transformation of everyday communication practices. Rather than framing digital confession as liberation or exposure, the article argues that it represents a negotiated communicative space where visibility is internalized, managed, and linguistically enacted—without the presence of an explicit watcher.

ICS01 Interpersonal Questions of Identity, Culture, and Agency

PP 0757 Constructing professional identities in co-teaching: An oppositional discourse analysis of teacher team communication

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Co-teaching has become increasingly common in higher education. It ranges from joint classroom instruction to collaborative planning and curriculum development and is associated with benefits such as improved student learning and teachers' professional development. At the same time, teacher collaboration can be inefficient and challenging, with a central issue being the negotiation of teachers' professional identities. These identities may be challenged by questions of autonomy, ownership, and power (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2020).

Identity work involves dialectical tensions that have been studied little in interdisciplinary teacher teams, where teachers must reconcile different perspectives to produce pedagogically coherent study modules. This study investigates how professional identities are constructed through the communication of interdisciplinary teacher teams designing multilingual phenomenon-based courses at a Finnish university. Based on 4.9 hours of transcribed planning meetings, we apply Fairhurst and Putnam's (2019) integrative methodology to identify oppositional discourses and their management. Our analysis focuses on contrasting identity repertoires, i.e., discursive clusters through which teachers position themselves and enact agency.

Preliminary findings indicate eight contrasting identity repertoires: (1) *collaboration and community*, (2) *individual agency and expertise*, (3) *team structures and agency*, (4) *organizational demands*, (5) *pedagogical ideals*, (6) *equality*, (7) *hierarchies and norms*, and (8) *incompleteness*. For example, *organizational demands* clash frequently with *team structures and agency* in meeting discussions, generating tensions as teachers negotiate and balance shared pedagogies with organizational structures.

By examining these dynamics, the study contributes to scholarship on interpersonal communication and organizational discourse by showing how macro-organizational discourses manifest in micro-level team interaction and how these micro practices construct broader organizational conditions. Understanding identity (re)construction in teacher team communication can support flexible transitions between different identities and, in turn, enhance high-quality collaboration and teaching.

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ICS01 Interpersonal Questions of Identity, Culture, and Agency

PP 0758 Listening without resonance: Inclusion performed, agency withheld

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In knowledge-intensive workplaces, inclusion is often equated with opportunities to speak. Yet voice does not guarantee agency: contributions may be invited but remain unacknowledged, exposing a critical gap between participation and influence. In practice, inclusion is frequently operationalized as access to speak, with far less attention to how contributions are received or taken up. This paper addresses the research problem of why listening has not been recognized as a constitutive force of professional communication. To explore this, it asks how listening shapes the relationship between voice and agency, how it influences responsibility and institutional power, and how professionals experience inclusion and exclusion through being heard or ignored.

The study draws on a qualitative survey with narrative reflections from 25 professionals in higher education, public-sector expert organizations, and policy-oriented institutions. Participants described experiences of inclusion, participation, being heard, and being ignored. Reflexive thematic analysis, informed by the Theory of Ethically Resonant Listening (TERL) and following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases, identified patterns of resonance, refusal, and responsibility redistribution, highlighting the interpersonal dynamics through which listening mediates agency. Written reflections gave participants space to speak candidly about difficult experiences and produced diverse accounts across institutional settings. This method complemented TERL's emphasis on vulnerability and interpretive risk, allowing participants to narrate how listening shaped their sense of agency.

Three central findings emerge. First, inclusion is frequently organized around access to speak, while agency is mediated through listening: opportunities for voice do not automatically translate into recognition or actionable uptake. Second, listening redistributes responsibility asymmetrically, shifting interpretive and emotional labor onto speakers while shielding institutions from accountability. Third, listening without uptake serves as a mechanism of control, allowing critique to surface yet stripping it of consequence, maintaining organizational stability while constraining change.

These findings challenge dominant assumptions in interpersonal and organizational communication that equate voice with participation and participation with agency. They demonstrate that inclusion cannot be evaluated solely through opportunities to speak but must be assessed in terms of the ethical quality of listening: whether contributions are taken up, ignored, or burdened with unequal responsibility. Because inclusion has been predominantly defined through voice, listening has been treated as secondary and overlooked in theory. This study demonstrates that listening is in fact constitutive: it is the practice through which agency, responsibility, and dissent are negotiated. Theoretically, this reframes listening as an ethically resonant practice rather than a supportive skill. Empirically, it reveals how non-resonant listening redistributes responsibility and stabilizes institutional power. Practically, it indicates that inclusion efforts must extend beyond opportunities to speak, encompassing the ways contributions are received, affirmed, or disregarded. This perspective opens new directions for research on agency, responsibility, and recognition in professional communication, showing that the most consequential effects of interaction arise not from speaking, but from the relational and ethical dynamics of being heard.

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ICS01 Interpersonal Questions of Identity, Culture, and Agency

PP 0759 Embodied accounts of physical work – A ventriloquial analysis of cleaners' break interactions

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This study aligns with the material shift in organizational research by examining how physical bodies exert agency in constructing occupational identity and organizing. Prior research has addressed embodied identity work among high-skilled workers such as professional mothers (Turunen et al., 2025), minority entrepreneurs (van Merriënboer, 2025), and creative gig workers (Alacovska et al., 2025). Cleaning work literature has considered materiality but focused on the material quality of dirt to be cleaned rather than the body as the medium of menial labor (e.g., Hughes et al., 2017). Our study deepens the discussion by exploring the body's role in the communicative constitution of cleaning work.

We adopt a communicative constitution of organization perspective, which illuminates non-human agency and the body as materialized in interaction. Specifically, we investigate how cleaners ventriloquize their bodies (e.g., Cooren, 2012) during break interactions. Breaks represent a unique interface between personal and organizational spheres, serving as spaces for community building, coping, and voicing concerns away from managerial oversight (Holmström, 2025). Data comprises video recordings of 21 authentic breakfast and lunch breaks (≈45 minutes each) among cleaners in a large Finnish organization, collected in 2021.

We analyze the recordings using a ventriloquial framework (Nathues et al., 2021), identifying, grouping, relating, and showing ventriloquial effects. We seek to understand what happens when the cleaners let their bodies speak and what implications mobilizing the body has for the construction of the cleaning occupation and the organizing process. Initial findings reveal cleaners invoking figures of the aching, tired body needing care; working conditions induced ill health requiring management; and physical ability tested by cleaning tasks. Cleaners act as dummies for contradictory ideals: employer responsibility, occupational wellbeing and physical vulnerability versus individual resourcefulness, resilience and efficiency. We argue that navigating body talk constitutes an important dimension of shared occupational expertise in blue-collar work.

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ICS02 Communicating in the Public Sphere: Rhetoric, Argumentation, and Narratives

PP 0864 The use of insulting as a rhetorical strategy in Dutch election debates

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Election debates are important events in democracies. Standpoints on policy are presented to the public; and as different candidates appear, citizens can compare them. Yet, this arena is not just about exchanging arguments for differing positions. Political discourse is also characterized by what Tracy called "reasonable hostility" (2008), which can be expressed through insults. Through an insult, contempt is expressed over another party, and has 'being insulted' as perlocutionary effect and is considered face-threatening (Jucker & Taavitsainen, 2000).Here, insults are analyzed in Dutch election debates from 2021, 2023 and 2025 based on work by Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000), who characterized insults as a speech act and connected it to face-work. We also look at how insults are taken up by the opponent.

Some insults pertain to the ideology of the candidate. Farid Azarkan (multiculturalist party) accuses Geert Wilders (far-right) of having a "fascist and racist ideology". Wilders then calls this scolding, showing disapproval, and claims next that he has a right to respond as he was insulted. Wilders articulates the importance to deal with the statement, and shows he has a right to defend himself. Then, Wilders stresses that he just raises facts and accuses Azarkan of just ranting and that he should reconsider his own ideology as it is against all Western values regarding women, queer people, apostates, and Christians. Azarkan responds by saying that Wilders personally does not uphold his standard regarding women, as he defended a party member who was accused of sexual assault. To the ideology insult, Wilders responds by annulling the criticism and attacking his opponent's ideology instead. Azarkan, instead, insults Wilders back as someone who personally condones it and has no right to speak.

We also see character insults (accused of being a bad person), motive insults (accused of not being sincere), ability insults (accused of being incapable) and discussion insults (accused of being unreasonable). Sigrid Kaag (Democrats) was insulted as traitor as she wore a headscarf when visiting Iran as minister of foreign affairs. Wilders was accused adhering his policies only because he started a new party and needed voters. Rutte was metaphorically insulted as a pyromaniac to argue he cannot solve the problems he caused. Wilders is accused of using voodoo-statistics. Insults are dealt with in different ways. Sometimes they are returned; but they can also be downgraded through an acknowledgement or denied through argumentation.

The goal is to show which types of insults are used in election debates and how these insults are embedded in a turn, as well as how these insults are picked up by the opponent. Based on the analyses, it is shown how insults are used to manage the interaction, and how they are an essential component of a study of interactional rhetoric.

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ICS02 Communicating in the Public Sphere: Rhetoric, Argumentation, and Narratives

PP 0865 Understanding without agreeing: DemoSlam as a contextual intervention for depolarization in Germany

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In times of deepening political polarization, democracies face an urgent challenge: how to restore mutual recognition and rebuild trust among citizens who increasingly perceive political opponents as illegitimate or morally flawed. In Germany polarization manifests not only as ideological distance but as affective hostility, undermining the shared symbolic space of

the public sphere (Mau et al., 2024). While a substantial body of research has examined online communication as both a driver and amplifier of polarization through platform-specific discourse architectures (Freelon, 2015; Esau et al., 2017; Yarchi et al., 2021), comparatively little attention has been paid to offline and hybrid formats that deliberately redesign the conditions of public communication to counter these dynamics.

This study investigates DemoSlam, a curated dialogue format developed by the German NGO MAGNET – Workshop for Understanding. DemoSlam brings together pairs of individuals with differing views who, after intensive preparatory workshops, present short joint "slams" to a wider audience. The format combines personal storytelling, performative elements, and moderated audience dialogue, aiming to foster "understanding without agreement." Rather than pursuing consensus or persuasion, DemoSlam aligns with the normative ideal of agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 1999), which conceptualizes democratic conflict as a respectful struggle among legitimate adversaries and recognizes emotions as constitutive rather than disruptive elements of democratic life.

Empirically, the study draws on ethnographic research conducted between 2024 and 2025 in four German municipalities: Dunningen and Rottenburg in Baden-Württemberg, and Meerane and Zittau in Saxony. These sites capture significant regional, socio-political, and historical variation. The data corpus includes participant observation of DemoSlam events, 134 audience feedback surveys, 22 in-depth interviews with slammers, 36 interviews with audience members and moderators, and reflexive field notes. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively; qualitative material was coded thematically using grounded theory principles.

The analysis conceptualizes DemoSlam as a deliberate intervention into speech context (van Dijk, 2015). Building on a multi-layered contextual framework, the study sconceptualizes DemoSlam as a meso-level communicative infrastructure mediating between micro-level interpersonal encounters and macro-level sociopolitical discourse. Findings indicate that DemoSlam consistently produces relational depolarization, supporting research on deliberative and dialogic formats that emphasizes emotional safety, storytelling, and facilitation as key conditions for depolarizing effects (Fishkin, 2018; Caluwaerts et al., 2023; Nakazawa et al., 2024). Participants rarely change their substantive political positions but frequently report shifts in perception, empathy, and recognition of the other as a legitimate interlocutor. Regional differences reveal that baseline trust and historical experiences condition the depth and fragility of these effects, particularly in post-socialist contexts marked by cynicism and collective memory of rupture. Overall, the study argues that depolarization operates here not through persuasion but through recontextualization: by redesigning the communicative situation itself, DemoSlam demonstrates the democratic potential of curated offline discourse architectures in polarized societies.

ICS02 Communicating in the Public Sphere: Rhetoric, Argumentation, and Narratives

PP 0866 Arguing by asking: The quasi-polar path to evaluating presumptive reasoning

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When does a respondent in a dialogue know that they have asked enough critical questions to accept a presumptive argument? In the realm of interpersonal communication, where arguments are often defeasible and context-dependent, this "Completeness Problem" poses a significant challenge to the study of persuasion. While Critical Questions (CQs) serve as vital heuristic tools for testing the quality of reasoning in social interactions, current theory lacks a systematic method to determine when this questioning process has been exhausted. This leaves interlocutors trapped between the practical need for a decisive conclusion and the open-ended nature of conversational nuance.

Recent scholarship attempts to resolve this tension through two distinct frameworks. The logical-substantive approach (Yu & Zenker, 2020) emphasizes a binary evaluation suited for strict logical coherence, where any flaw leads to rejection. Conversely, the formulational approach (Baumtrog, 2021) favors a scalar evaluation, weighing the cumulative strength of communicative moves without enforcing a rigid cutoff. This paper argues that viewing these methods as opposing alternatives fails to capture the complexity of actual argumentative exchanges.

To address this, the study introduces the concept of "quasi-polarity" as a mechanism for understanding evaluation in social contexts. It posits that while the final decision to accept or reject an argument in a dialogue is binary (a "quasi-polar" outcome), this decision is grounded in a scalar assessment of the interlocutor's credibility and the content's plausibility. Crucially, the threshold for satisfaction is not fixed by logic alone but is negotiated through the interpersonal relationship and the specific epistemic standards of the interaction (e.g., a casual conversation versus a formal debate).

Building on this, the paper proposes a Procedural Model that integrates these approaches to better map the dynamics of social persuasion. This model employs binary checks to ensure the structural integrity of the argument while using scalar assessment to weigh substantive objections raised during the interaction. By aligning the evaluation process with the natural flow of interpersonal influence, this "quasi-polar" path offers a robust method for determining when the burden of questioning has been fulfilled, ensuring that argumentation schemes can effectively guide rational persuasion in diverse social settings.

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ICS02 Communicating in the Public Sphere: Rhetoric, Argumentation, and Narratives

PP 0867 How to persuade without backlash on social media: Message framing and reactance in influencer communication

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Social media influencers (SMIs) have established themselves as digital opinion leaders on various public-interest issues, such as environmental and health topics, due to their wide reach and perceived closeness to audiences (Dekoninck & Schmuck, 2022; Gupta et al., 2022). However, persuasive messages on such sensitive areas can easily elicit psychological reactance: recipients may resist or reject the intended message because they feel that it is being imposed on them and restricting their freedom (Brehm et al., 1966; Ma & Hmielowski, 2022; Reynolds-Tylus, 2019). Against this backdrop, for SMIs, messages formulation is crucial in order to address such issues without scaring off followers.

In persuasive communication, message framing theory provides a good starting point: A common distinction is made between gain framing, which emphasizes positive consequences of a behavior, and loss framing, which highlights negative consequences of inaction (Rothman et al., 2006). Research on gain vs. loss frames is extensive but results remain ambivalent: some studies show that gain frames reduce reactance and increase attitude and behavior change (Reinhardt et al., 2007; Xu, 2019) while others find opposite effects (Hong & Kim, 2024; Ratcliff et al., 2019). Moreover, little is known about how framing effects transfer to SMI communication, which is heavily based on informal, fast-paced messaging. An exemplary study in this field by Olbermann et al. (2024) shows that gain frames tend to evoke positive emotions, while loss frames are associated with negative emotions. However, more research is required, also with regard to intervening personality factors and diversity of topics.

We conducted three online experiments on how gain and loss framing influence perceived reactance, attitudes, and behavioral intentions. Study 1 examines how message framing on vegan nutrition and health affects reactance, considering self-esteem as a moderator (N = 136). Study 2 focuses on vegan nutrition and environmental consequences, with trait reactance as a moderator (N = 134). Study 3 examines framing on vegan nutrition and plastic use regarding health outcomes (N = 206) (Stimuli and questionnaire: https://osf.io/z4rqk/overview?view_only=67c3b68001f34ecdabb683a0edb92fb5).

Moderated mediation analyses (Hayes, 2018) show that loss framing leads to more reactance across all studies than gain frames (Study 1: b = -.72, p < .01, Study 2: b = -.74, p < .01, Study 3: b = -.61, p < .05). Reactance, in turn, has a negative effect on environmental attitudes (Study 2: b = -.32, p < .001, Study 3: b = -.26, p < .001) and environmentally friendly behavioral intentions (Study 1: b = -.43, p < .001; Study 2: b = -.55, p < .001, Study 3: b = -.43, p < .001). Significant indirect effects were found across all studies, indicating that gain framing, compared to loss framing, increases attitudes and behavioral intentions via reactance (all 95% CIs exclude zero). No moderating effect of the topic was found in Study 3 (b = .04, p = 92). The moderators trait reactance (Study 2: b = -.26, p = .29) and self-esteem (Study 1: b = .15, p = .52) also play no role in the relationship between framing and reactance.

These findings suggest that SMI should rely on gain frames in their communication because of their ability to reduce reactance to messages. This effect is independent of the topics examined. Individual traits seem to have no influence. Further implications and limitations will be discussed in detail during the presentation.

ICS02 Communicating in the Public Sphere: Rhetoric, Argumentation, and Narratives

PP 0868 City as a nonlinear narrative: Inhabitant experience in a posthuman communication environment

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The contemporary urban experience already now resists linear modes of explanation. Rather than being encountered as a coherent, chronologically ordered whole, the city is lived through fragments, interruptions, repetitions, sensory encounters, technological mediations, and interactions with both human and non-human agents. This paper approaches the city as a **nonlinear narrative**, arguing that urban communication emerges not primarily through institutional messages or official discourses, but through everyday relational experiences of inhabitants and historical curves.

The study is situated at the intersection of interpersonal communication, narrative theory, and posthumanist communication studies. While interpersonal communication research has traditionally focused on human-centered interactional processes, this paper extends the field by examining how interpersonal meaning-making unfolds within a posthuman urban environment shaped by infrastructures, objects, rhythms, and material agencies. Drawing on posthumanist theory and contemporary narratology, the city is conceptualized as a communicative environment in which inhabitants function as narrative nodes rather than passive receivers of messages.

The **aim of the research** is to explore how urban inhabitants construct meaning through nonlinear narrative processes embedded in everyday social interaction with their environment. The central research questions address: (1) how daily urban experiences become structured as nonlinear narratives; (2) how non-human agents (architecture, technologies, urban objects) participate in interpersonal meaning-making; and (3) how narrative fragmentation influences social interaction, orientation, and communication in the city.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative and interpretative approach combining **walking methodology**, **narrative interviews**, and **autoethnographic reflection**. Empirical material is drawn from urban experiences in Kaunas as the primary case, with selected comparative insights from Vilnius. These methods allow for the analysis of interpersonal communication as it unfolds in movement, co-presence, and sensory engagement with urban space.

The paper contributes to the Interpersonal Communication and Social Interaction section by reframing interpersonal communication as a **distributed, nonlinear, and posthuman process**, extending beyond face-to-face interaction to include spatial, material, and technological agencies. By conceptualizing the city as a nonlinear narrative environment, the study offers a novel framework for understanding how social interaction, identity, and meaning are co-produced in contemporary urban life. This approach opens new perspectives for communication research concerned with everyday interaction, urban experience, and the evolving boundaries of the communicative subject within posthuman environments.

ICS03 Constructing Well-Being In and Through Communication

PP 0970 Conflicts and coping of dilemmas of the "good patient" role in interpersonal communication networks of people with chronic diseases

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The role model of a "good patient" with a chronic disease is a highly motivated person who continuously self-manages their disease, e.g., with the support of digital media. However, patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes or asthma are often challenged to adhere to these role expectations (Borgetto, 2023). Chronic diseases with their unpredictable but ongoing trajectories, which move from diagnosis (onset) through stable, unstable, acute, crisis, and eventual decline or recovery phases, often require social support by professional and private contacts in interpersonal networks (Schaeffer & Haslbeck, 2023). These challenges to fulfill the expectations may lead to role conflicts (Dahrendorf, 2006) and the need to cope not only with the chronic disease, but also with the resulting dilemmas between the (unrealistic) expectation of others "to become healthy" and the need "to survive on a daily basis" (Jellen, Ohlbrecht & Winkler, 2018). Although these dilemmas are known, there is a lack of research on the resulting social interactions and processes of (non)disclosure of patients in their interpersonal networks with private contacts and physicians. Thus, we aim to analyze the patients' perceptions and (non)disclosure of role conflicts and strategies to cope with them.

Therefore, we conducted 2025 in-depth interviews with N = 64 patients with diabetes type 1 or 2, asthma, or Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease in Germany. The interviews were part of two research projects within a research unit on (digital) self-management of chronic diseases. The studies followed strict ethical guidelines to ensure participant protection. The IRB approved the project in terms of ethical aspects. Before participating in the in-depth interviews, participants were informed about the study as well as the legal basis for data processing and were asked to give informed consent about study participation, data analysis, and publication. The data was collected anonymously. The interviews were based on an interview guideline, which covers the following topics: Barriers and opportunities of (digital) self-management, perceptions of self- and external expectations, physician–patient relationship. They were transcribed verbatim and analyzed based on a theory-driven approach.

Results show how challenging the role dilemma between self-responsibility for health, the continuous confrontation with one's chronic condition, the need for social support, and adherence to physicians' treatment recommendations, as well as family members' expectations, can be in the patients' everyday lives. Strategies to cope with those dilemmas include nondisclosure, which often results in a vicious circle, in which physicians, family members, and patients feel frustrated and powerless, which can complicate and even hinder the management of chronic diseases.

Consequently, the "unattainable" role of the "good patient" can interfere with the treatment plan and use of digital media for chronic disease self-management. Ideas for disclosure and discussion of role conflicts in interpersonal networks as part of the disease management will be discussed.

ICS03 Constructing Well-Being In and Through Communication

PP 0971 The "good communication" between children and professionals within child welfare – A scoping review

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The study aims to synthesize conceptualizations of good communication in studies of communication between children and child welfare professionals. Social work is constituted in social interaction and thus, interactions between a child

and professionals are a central concern in child welfare. Consequently, social interaction and practices aiming at good encounters in social and child welfare work have been studied largely, e.g. from the perspectives of challenges emerging in interactions, professionals' roles in supporting the child and relationships between professionals and children.

Good encounters and practices in child welfare have been researched in fields outside communication studies, yet research on these themes from the perspective of communication theory remains limited. Our approach on "good communication" relies on Graves' (2021) ideas of good communication, defining it as the situated ideals that communicators possess of communication, and how they approach them in discourse, while managing tensions and dilemmas. In child welfare work, these situated ideals may differ or even contradict each other among children and professionals.

This study has one research question: how is good communication portrayed explicitly and implicitly in research of social interaction between children and child welfare professionals? Mapping out research on interactions between children and professionals constructs a synthesis of characteristics of good communication in child welfare. The study utilizes the scoping review method to identify gaps in earlier research and to connect existing findings. We draw from a methodological framework of Arksey and O'Malley (2005) for scoping studies. The articles were retrieved from interdisciplinary databases of EBSCO with various keywords describing interactions between children or young people and professionals working in child welfare.

Preliminary literature search yielded 143 articles, resulting in 136 articles after removing duplicate records. Of the 136 records, abstracts were viewed according to the relevance of the research question. After the screening process, 34 articles were included in the review. The analysis is performed manually and inductively.

Preliminary findings according to the ongoing analysis show that most studies present good communication implicitly, while focus is usually on collaboration between professionals and children. Communication seems to be deemed "good" when the child feels heard and is able to and given a chance to influence the outcomes of the interactions. Professionals specifically view communication with the child as successful when they are equipped with enough understanding of the child's situation and communication skills to encounter the child as expected and in accordance with their own professional ethics.

This study aims for a two-fold contribution. First, it provides an integrated understanding of good communication practices in child welfare through a communication theoretical lens. Second, this integrated understanding can be utilized as a guide for both theoretical and empirical future research.

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ICS03 Constructing Well-Being In and Through Communication

PP 0972 "Along the way, I've come to see where my strength ends and my vulnerability begins": Dialectical discourses of exhaustion and recovery

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Burnout is often portrayed as an individual phenomenon, centered on personal resilience and responsibility. In this study, we challenge that perspective by examining meanings embedded in burnout discourse. Instead of focusing solely on individual coping, we explore the interpretations and narratives that emerge in discussions among people who have experienced burnout. Drawing on focus group interview data, we analyze these discourses to understand how meaning-making processes shape experiences of exhaustion and recovery.

We apply qualitative contrapuntal analysis informed by Baxter's (2011) Relational Dialectics Theory 2.0 (RDT 2.0), which views meaning as emerging through discursive struggles rather than individual needs, emphasizing the interplay of competing discourses and their power asymmetries (Malhotra et al., 2022). Using this lens, we position individual accounts within organizational and societal contexts to reveal tensions between individualized and collective interpretations of burnout. The data for currently consists of two focus group discussions (approximately four hours of recorded conversation) with individuals engaged in Finnish working life, either actively employed or on sick leave, representing a diverse range of occupations. Additional data collection is ongoing.

Our preliminary findings indicate that discursive struggles between individualism and structural level discourses construct the meaning of burnout and are also intertwined with how people exhausted by work define self, workplace relationships, and work in their discussions. On the individual level, burnout is often framed as a matter of personal responsibility and self-management. It is constructed as a challenge to one's competence and identity, accompanied by feelings of inadequacy and fear of stigma. Recovery narratives tend to be narrow, emphasizing individual solutions such as career changes,

retraining, or extended absence from work. Coping strategies frequently involve distancing or trivializing the experience, yet underlying these narratives is a sense of powerlessness and the perception that exhaustion reflects personal failure.

At the structural level, burnout is linked to organizational and societal structures that shape work practices and expectations. Workplace norms often valorize endurance and discourage vulnerability, while empathy and support mechanisms remain limited. Organizational practices lack clear procedures for reintegration after absence, and guidelines for workload and availability are inconsistent. Broader cultural narratives reinforce ideals of perseverance and collective sacrifice, while access to support varies according to privilege and systemic constraints. These dynamics can be further organized into three tension-filled relationships: individual agency vs. structural constraints; organizational vs. personal responsibility and professional vs. "sick person" identity.

Our findings indicate that burnout arises where individual responsibility meets structural constraints. Addressing these tensions requires shifting from individual fixes to systemic solutions that transform organizational practices and cultural norms.

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ICS03 Constructing Well-Being In and Through Communication

PP 0973 Communication competence of First Aid Service personnel in frontline dialogue with traumatized combatants: Strategic language choices for emotional co-construction

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Current and emerging armed conflicts in Europe and worldwide create conditions in which the communication competence of frontline personnel increasingly determines the resilience of societies and their capacity to withstand aggression. In such contexts, First Aid Service (FAS) personnel — including paramedics, medevac teams, physicians, and military chaplains — must rely on interpersonal communication as a core professional resource alongside their medical and operational duties.

In frontline practice, professional communication competence is realised through carefully selected language choices that help regulate emotional intensity, maintain interpersonal contact, and prevent interactional breakdown at the moment when dialogic contact with a traumatized combatant is first established. These initial exchanges are often brief but decisive, shaping the conditions under which assistance can be provided and emotional escalation avoided.

This study approaches frontline communication from the perspective of language in action in professional settings (Schnurr, 2024) and its interpersonal impact (McGlone & Giles, 2011) in high-stakes encounters. The empirical material derives from a long-term qualitative research project conducted between 2017 and 2025. Earlier phases of the study involved 82 structured questionnaires mapping communicative challenges in frontline care (Liubashenko, 2024). The present analysis focuses on 18 in-depth interviews collected through direct fieldwork in war zones in Ukraine.

The interviews were designed as testimonies (Curling, 2005) and included both First Aid Service personnel and combatants. Participants were invited to recall concrete moments of verbal interaction during initial encounters and to describe what was said, how it was said, and how this affected their emotional state, including memories of specific words, pauses, or shifts in tone that helped establish dialogic contact.

The qualitative thematic analysis identifies a set of dialogic strategies oriented toward emotional regulation and interactional stability during first contact. These strategies include the explicit naming of emotional states, controlled repetition of stabilising expressions, resonance with positive affect, and other interactional moves recalled by participants as effective. Taken together, they demonstrate the ability of First Aid Service personnel to make appropriate language choices in managing emotional co-construction as an interactional process. This supports the view that linguistic choices play a constitutive role in shaping emotion perception and professional dialogic interaction (Lindquist & Gendron, 2013).

The findings provide evidence that First Aid Service as a profession requires systematic communication training grounded in empirical experience of direct dialogic interaction at distribution points, frontline hospitals, and during evacuation from the first line. More broadly, the study suggests that a growing scholarly focus on interpersonal communication practices in workplaces located in zones of armed conflict is likely to become a defining research trajectory in the coming decades.

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ICS03 Constructing Well-Being In and Through Communication

PP 0974 Developing a communication resilience intervention for interprofessional health teams

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Drawing on ongoing pilot research, this abstract details a novel, theory-driven communication resilience intervention in the context of interprofessional health teams in Finland. Although resilience is often characterized as an individual trait or psychological capacity, communication theorists (Buzzanell, 2010) instead assert that resilience is a relational process constituted in everyday interpersonal interactions. Health care workers can cultivate resilience through everyday interactions with their interprofessional health teams (e.g., social services, pharmacists, nurses).

According to communication theory of resilience (CTR), engaging five specific communication processes can cultivate resilience and support well-being over time, including: (a) crafting normalcy, (b) affirming identity anchors, (c) maintaining and using communication networks, (d) putting alternative logics to work, and (e) foregrounding productive action while backgrounding negative emotion. CTR asserts that strengthening these communicative processes can facilitate adaptation and transformation, enabling interprofessional health teams to coordinate action while enduring strain. However, communication scholars have yet to translate CTR theorizing and research into a resilience-based intervention.

Healthcare and social service professionals are poised to benefit from a communication resilience intervention, as they face myriad stressors threatening their individual well-being, the functioning of the interprofessional team, and the quality of health care delivery (Nykänen & Mikkola, 2020). Our ongoing pilot research with hospital and social service workers has enabled us to tailor the theorized CTR resilience processes to the Finnish cultural context. For example, we have drawn connections and distinctions among resilience and the Finnish cultural construct of "sisu," characterized by perseverance, grit, goal achievement, and self-reliance.

The proposed intervention will be delivered in interprofessional health team-based formats and will integrate multiple communicative components, including facilitated dialogue, reflective exercises, scenario-based discussions, and skills-based training. Rather than prescribing uniform coping strategies, the proposed intervention will cultivate structured communicative spaces in which interprofessional health teams can negotiate meanings of stress and care across specializations.

Drawing upon a mixed-methods design, this study will evaluate quantitative outcomes, alongside measures assessing team communication quality and perceived social support. Qualitative data, including feedback on the intervention and reflections on the applicability of the resilience processes in clinical practice, will be used to examine how participants enact resilience through their interprofessional communication over time. We will examine how resilience processes are co-constructed across professional roles and organizational contexts within the Finnish integrated healthcare and social services system.

Understanding resilience as a communicative accomplishment rather than an individual trait advances the field of interpersonal communication and communication resilience theorizing by translating sensitizing concepts into a practical intervention. The proposed intervention is scalable, offering a communication-centered model intended to catalyze resilience in interprofessional teams. More broadly, this study demonstrates how communication theory can inform intervention designs addressing systemic stressors while simultaneously honoring the relational and constitutive theorizing of resilience in care-oriented professions**.**

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ICS04 Talking With, Through, and About Communication Technologies and AI

PP 1070 From crosstalk to being ignored: The communicative challenges of strategizing in hybrid team meetings

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The longevity of an organization depends heavily on the decisions and actions of its top management team (TMT), widely regarded as the "primary shaper" of an organization's strategic direction (Finkelstein et al., 2009). From a strategy-as-practice (SAP) standpoint, this "shaping" is strategizing—an inherently communicative process. Strategizing highlights that strategy is not static, but something done through "actions, interactions, and negotiations of multiple actors, along with the

situated practices that they draw upon to accomplish that activity" (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007, pp. 7–8). While strategizing occurs across various sites, formal meetings remain a central arena (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008), increasingly in hybrid formats where some participants are co-located, and others join remotely.

Hybrid meetings offer advantages such as reduced travel and greater flexibility, but they also introduce communicative challenges. Online participants often have limited access to non-verbal cues, face a higher risk of being overlooked, and encounter more distractions (Ellis et al., 2022). Research by Janssens and Van de Mieroop (2025) shows that remote participants are disadvantaged because they cannot fully access embodied (inter)actions among co-located members, making it difficult to interpret gaze, gestures, and other multimodal signals essential to participation.

Against this backdrop, we ask: *How is strategizing performed in hybrid TMT meetings, and what communicative challenges emerge in the process?* To explore this question, we analyze video recordings of twelve hybrid meetings held by the TMT of a boutique consulting firm in France. Drawing on Janssens and Van de Mieroop (2025), we conduct a multimodal interaction analysis that examines the interplay between human actors (co-located and remote) and "other-than-human" actors (Cooren, 2020), such as screens and shared documents. This approach enables us to capture how strategizing is accomplished across hybrid interactional spaces.

Preliminary findings indicate that the number of remote participants significantly shapes strategizing practices. When only one or two participants join remotely, they are more likely to go unnoticed. Conversely, meetings with a more balanced distribution of co-located and remote participants exhibit a fairer allocation of "airtime" and more even participation. These early observations show how hybrid formats can intensify communicative challenges during strategic decision-making. More detailed findings on the multimodal strategizing interactions would be presented at ECC 2026.

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ICS04 Talking With, Through, and About Communication Technologies and AI

PP 1071 Generative AI in adolescents' everyday lives: A qualitative network analysis of social contexts shaping diffusion and adoption

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The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT has fundamentally altered young people's everyday media practices, particularly in educational and peer-related contexts. While existing research has largely focused on individual use and attitudes toward generative AI, less is known about how such technologies are embedded within adolescents' social networks and how social relationships shape both usage practices and perceptions of competence. This study addresses this gap by examining the diffusion, use, and meaning-making of generative AI within the close social networks of adolescents.

Using a qualitative network analysis, we explore (1) how generative AI spreads within adolescents' social networks, (2) how and in which contexts generative AI is used, (3) who is perceived as competent regarding generative AI, (4) adolescents' attitudes toward generative AI and how these are shaped by social influence, and (5) what the discourse on generative AI looks like and in what context it takes place.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with six adolescents (average age: 14 years), one parent and one close friend for each adolescent, resulting in a total sample of 18 participants. During the interviews, participants also created a social network map with generative AI placed at its centre. Adolescents, parents and friends were positioned around the centre according to their perceived relevance for AI adoption. The interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis with a relational focus, allowing for the examination of both individual perspectives and network-based dynamics.

The findings suggest that adolescents usually encounter generative AI for the first time at school or through classmates and friends, whereas parents appear to adopt this technology at a later stage. Adolescents reported a regular use of generative AI, primarily ChatGPT, with a particular focus on support for school-related tasks. They and their friends often described

themselves as highly competent, perceiving generative AI as largely self-explanatory and acquiring skills through learning by doing. Overall, adolescents showed a rather positive attitude towards generative AI and were aware of its potential benefits and risks, whereas parents tended to underestimate their children's awareness of the latter. Interestingly, adolescents' attitudes resembled those of their friends who were interviewed, and in some cases negative views held by parents seem to be transferred to their children. Communication about generative AI mainly happened usage-related. Furthermore, the topic did not seem to be a major subject of conversation between parents and children at home.

In summary, the findings highlight the importance of considering generative AI use not only as an individual practice but as a socially embedded phenomenon shaped by relationships and discourses within adolescents' close social networks.

ICS04 Talking With, Through, and About Communication Technologies and AI

PP 1072 Changing work and leadership needs of public communication professionals in the age of AI

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The introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) in organizations is rapidly changing work across sectors and professions. For communication professionals, AI has been envisioned to improve efficiency, facilitate information management, and support creative processes. However, concerns include the robotization of content, spreading of misinformation, and the erosion of interpersonal communication and collaboration. Communication experts have a dual role: they must make sense of AI in relation to their own work and explain it within their organization and to diverse stakeholders. Despite these responsibilities, the effects of AI on communication work remain underexplored, particularly in the public sector, where communication is expected to be reliable and ethical, yet bureaucratic structures may hinder or slow down AI adoption.

This case study examines experienced changes in work and leadership needs for communication professionals in a public city organization in Finland. We ask (1) How do public sector communication professionals perceive the impacts of AI integration on their work characteristics? (2) What leadership needs do public sector communicators identify in relation to AI's impact on work characteristics? Data, collected in autumn 2025, comprises three focus group interviews with communication experts and managers, two individual interviews with the director of communications, and supplementary materials including internal guidelines, strategic documents, and website content. Analysis followed phronetical-iterative qualitative content analysis (Tracy et al., 2024), combining inductive, data-driven analysis with theory-driven interpretation, using the work characteristics model (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) as a sensitizing framework.

Our analysis identified key work characteristics relevant to AI adoption across task, competence, social, and organizational-cultural dimensions. Leadership needs included providing time, space, and concreteness for AI learning, balancing obligation and voluntariness, facilitating team-based reflection and learning, and acting as a front-runner of expected AI use. While interviewees considered much of their pre-AI communication expertise transferable to post-AI work, new tasks and competence requirements have emerged. Monitoring the ethical and appropriate use of AI in communication across the organization was described as a particularly burdensome and time-consuming new task that requires communication professionals' understanding of high-quality communication content and tone. Although AI was primarily described as a tool with little relational or collegial attributes, its adoption had been perceived to reduce human interpersonal contact, such as collegial questioning, especially in remote work. Relatedly, communication professionals emphasized a need for leaders to enable and facilitate collaborative reflection and learning of AI use in interpersonal communication. Cultural and organizational characteristics of public sector work were evident in concerns about communication content generated with AI, especially in regards to the pervasive "Americanization" of content, and the possible decrease in trustworthiness of public sector communication.

In sum, our findings suggest that the successful leadership of AI adoption in public communication requires (1) acknowledging and nurturing the expertise of communication professionals that persists from pre-AI to post-AI work (2) facilitating collaborative and reflective integration of AI and (3) encouraging AI use and learning while supporting professionals' autonomy. We will further discuss theoretical and practical implications in our presentation.

ICS04 Talking With, Through, and About Communication Technologies and AI

PP 1073 Voice, presence and alliance: Towards a theoretical framework for voice-based human–AI communication in mental health support

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It is estimated that around 1 in 7 people worldwide are affected by a mental health condition, yet most of these individuals do not have access to effective treatment (WHO, 2025). This is one of the main reasons why people experiencing temporary or long-term mental health issues are turning to modern AI technologies for alternative solutions. For example, over a million people use ChatGPT every week to engage in conversations that show clear signs of potential suicidal intent or planning

(Zeff, 2025). AI chatbots are increasingly being used around the world to access mental health support (Rousmaniere et al., 2025).

Many countries predominantly utilise interpersonal communication, such as talking to friends or family, when addressing anxiety and depression. Globally, this approach is employed by 78.0% of individuals, including 77.7% in Europe, 77.5% in Asia, and 80.4% in North America (Dattani, 2023). In more than two dozen countries, this figure exceeds 85% (Dattani, 2023). This highlights the crucial role of interpersonal communication in addressing and managing depressive symptoms. However, while most research on the use of AI for mental health support focuses on text-based communication with AI systems, voice-based communication is largely overlooked.

Current studies in the field of interpersonal communication often focus on the role of AI systems as 'digital interlocutors' (Edwards & Edwards, 2017, p. 487), setting them apart from the traditional role of machines as a medium. However, intrapersonal communication, also known as self-communication, which always exists alongside interpersonal communication, tends to be overlooked. In this context, I propose that AI systems fulfil multiple roles. One of these is facilitating deep interpersonal communication between humans and AI systems by promoting self-communication, a technique frequently employed in psychotherapy and life coaching. Therefore, AI systems could also act as 'promoters' of self-communication within the sphere of interpersonal communication.

Anthropomorphism plays an important role in this communication process. When we talk about it, we tend to think of things that we can see and perceive. However, we often forget that language — both written and spoken — is also a form of anthropomorphism. Language is not the domain of machines or AI. Rather, it is a human ability that we impart to them. This is why users tend to develop trust and an emotional connection with AI chatbots, especially when they interact with them regularly over a long period of time. I call this 'invisible anthropomorphism'.

This interdisciplinary research paper presents a framework that explains the mechanisms of voice-based communication between users and AI systems. It integrates classic theories of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and computer-mediated communication, as well as various cross-disciplinary theories, such as the media equation, parasocial relationships, social presence, and interaction research. This includes Goffman's theory of interaction order and affective prosody. The paper situates these theories within the context of the voice medium to demonstrate the potential of communication with AI systems to provide mental health support, and to what extent this support is effective.

ICS04 Talking With, Through, and About Communication Technologies and AI

PP 1074 Conversations with machines: Introducing the "CAT Technology Equivalence Model (CAT-TEC)"

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Due to the increasing capacity of AI-based chatbots to engage in human-like interactions, exchanges between humans and technologies are becoming increasingly frequent. Despite this growing relevance, our understanding of how machines can participate in verbally productive and socially meaningful interactions remains limited. Building on the premise that contemporary AI systems are capable of adapting to human users across multiple domains—including agency attribution, verbal interaction, and emotion recognition—this paper introduces a theoretical framework for the systematic analysis of human–machine verbal communication. We propose the CAT Technology Equivalence Model (CAT-TEC), which adapts Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to interactions involving artificial conversational agents. Originally developed as Speech Accommodation Theory and later expanded into Communication Accommodation Theory, CAT explains how individuals adjust their communicative behavior to that of their interaction partners. Accommodation processes operate at linguistic levels such as lexical choice, syntax, and speech rate, as well as with respect to social categories including status, age, and gender. While CAT has been extensively applied to human–human communication, its application to human–technology interaction remains comparatively recent (Giles et al., 2023). CAT-based analyses typically focus on linguistic styles and communicative behaviors within specific interaction contexts. In interpersonal communication research, accommodative behavior is often interpreted as a means of fostering recognition or social acceptance. However, interpersonal communication extends beyond verbal exchange, encompassing role negotiation, social attribution, and relational positioning. These dimensions become particularly relevant when humans interact with technologies that display increasingly adaptive and socially responsive behavior. Drawing on existing CAT research, the CAT-TEC model extends the theory to human–machine interaction by introducing categories especially salient in this context. These include anthropomorphization, trust versus distrust, speech alignment, responsiveness, and parasocial orientation. The model assumes functional equivalence between human and technological interaction partners with regard to accommodation processes, while acknowledging asymmetries in agency and intentionality.

The Study

To empirically explore the CAT-TEC model, we conducted an experimental study in a Human–Robot Lab using GPTo, a spoken version of ChatGPT. The study addressed three guiding research questions: (a) which verbal accommodation strategies emerge in human–machine interaction, (b) how trust is constructed or challenged, and (c) how emotional relationships develop during interaction. Participants engaged in conversations on (1) lovesickness and (2) a moral dilemma involving

a friend's car accident. The conversations (n = 10) were video-recorded, transcribed, and followed by a post-experimental questionnaire. The analysis focused on semantic alignment, morphosyntactic structures, responsiveness, speech acts, self-disclosure patterns, and parasocial expressions. Results revealed clear patterns of accommodation, including both convergence and divergence. Observed strategies included reduced speech rates, reformulations, politeness strategies, and semantic alignment, alongside moments of distrust toward machine-generated information and occasional disengagement. Overall, the findings support the CAT-TEC model as a concise theoretical framework for analyzing verbal accommodation in human–machine interaction and contribute to a deeper understanding of social dynamics in AI-mediated communication.

- Giles, H., Edwards, A., & Walther, J. B. (2023). Communication accommodation theory: Past accomplishments, current trends, and future prospects. Language Sciences, 99, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2023.101571

ICS05 At the Core of Interpersonal Relations: Questions of Closeness, Loneliness, and Dislike

PP 1171 Factors determining bystanders' attitudes towards and reactions on online hate speech

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OHS can be defined as the expression towards an individual or group of "hatred or degrading attitudes toward a collective" (Hawdon et al., 2017, p. 254), aimed to devalue and demean them collectively. Central here is the shared characteristic of the collective, such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics (Johnson et al., 2019). OHS can have severe negative mental health and well-being outcomes for those who are exposed to OHS, both victims and bystanders, including feelings of depression, anxiety, self-doubt, and insecurity (e.g., Dreißigacker et al., 2024).

In order to find ways to reduce or discontinue OHS, researchers have indicated the potential of bystander interventions. Bystanders are social media users who witness OHS directed to other(s) (groups) on social media. Bystanders can discourage perpetrators from spreading OHS by reporting and reacting. By indicating their disagreement, victims might feel supported. However, studies indicate that most of the bystanders remain passive when witnessing OHS (Rudnicki et al., 2022).

A growing body of research has focused on personal characteristics, contextual factors, and content-related factors that shape bystander perceptions (Bormann et al., 2021; Schmid et al. 2024). Multiple factors have been found to be associated with attitudinal (someone's evaluation of OHS) and behavioral (someone's reaction on OHS) components of bystanders' perceptions, relying on experimental and cross-sectional data. However, bystanders' personal experiences or interpretations of how these perceptions are exactly formed remain unclear. To fill this gap, this research project wants to contribute to the growing body of research on perceptions of bystanders. By extending the knowledge on how bystanders' perceptions are formed, more effective campaigns can be developed to promote bystander interventions.

To this aim, in-depth interviews were conducted among 25 young social media users (aged 19–25). Data were analyzed by using a thematic analysis approach. First, the results indicated that bystanders define OHS in different ways and that these definitions differ from those used by, for instance, researchers, platforms, and policy makers. Our findings stress the importance of considering social media users' perceptions of OHS as substantial variations in defining OHS could have regulatory implications. For instance, a bystander might not perceive an incident as OHS and, therefore, does not report the incident, while the speech is violating the social media platform's community standards according to the platform's definition of OHS. Second, our findings indicated that attitudes and reactions are formed, according to bystanders, by a diverse set of personal, contextual, and content-related factors. Perceptions on OHS cannot be traced back to a few factors and there seems to be large individual differences in which factors determine eventually one's attitude towards OHS and subsequent reactions. However, what bystanders seem to have in common is their perception of the normalcy of OHS in the online discourse. They perceive this type of speech as 'normal', but are at the same time also aware of potential negative outcomes on the individual and societal level. At the conference, a critical discussion of the results in terms of theoretical and practical implications will be presented.

ICS05 At the Core of Interpersonal Relations: Questions of Closeness, Loneliness, and Dislike

PP 1172 What activates people to react to hate speech on social media? Evidence from a survey experiment

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The persistence of online hate speech directed at different minorities raises central theoretical questions about how digital publics negotiate (online) social norms, as well as about the effectiveness of regulatory, platform-based, and community-level interventions designed to reduce hate speech. Although policy responses primarily focus on platform regulation and content moderation, the research community has initiated a debate regarding bystander activation as a micro-level mechanism for disrupting cycles of hate speech (Obermaier et al., 2023; Rudnicki et al., 2022; Zapata et al., 2024). However, findings remain limited regarding the types of counter-speech that might generate prosocial behavior and under what conditions bystanders are likely to intervene.

Against this background, this study aims to isolate the mechanisms through which different types of counter-speech affect engagement, as well as to conceptualize user responses based on two lenses: (1) normative influence theory and (2) bystander intervention theory. It argues that online bystander action emerges when counter-speech communicates two elements simultaneously: a clear moral stance (what is right to do) and a perception that "others like me" endorse this stance.

To test its assumptions, this study uses a pre-registered 2x4 survey experiment (N = 830), with a focus on LGBTQIA+ community in Romania where the rights of people belonging to this minority are highly contested and hate speech is widespread. Participants viewed a hateful Facebook post targeting two gay men and were randomly assigned to counter-speech conditions that varied in type (educating the perpetrator, abusing them, showing empathy for the victim, or diverting conversation) and normative strength (one vs. three comments), alongside a control group. Dependent variables captured behavioral intentions reflecting positive engagement (reporting, counter-arguing, supporting LGBTQIA+ people) and negative engagement (liking, sharing, endorsing the hateful post).

Findings indicate that the only successful strategy to make bystanders act against hate speech is to have a clear wave of empathy towards the victim, but the strategy only works for people whose general opinions about LGBTQIA+ people are not strongly negative. This suggests that counter-speech does not have uniform effects across audiences, but is conditioned by pre-existing orientations toward the targeted group.

ICS05 At the Core of Interpersonal Relations: Questions of Closeness, Loneliness, and Dislike

PP 1173 The impact of co-present smartphone use on the quality of face-to-face social interactions, closeness and loneliness in everyday life

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Smartphones are ubiquitous in face-to-face social interactions, yet their implications for interaction quality, social connectedness, and loneliness in everyday life remain contested. This research investigates how smartphone use during in-person encounters – particularly the degree of attention directed toward interaction partners – shapes perceived interaction quality, subsequent feelings of closeness, and momentary loneliness.

Across three complementary studies, we examine these relationships using both observational, experimental, and intensive longitudinal methods to examine these processes in daily life. Study 1 employed experience sampling with more than 150 Spanish emerging adults, yielding more than 10,000 momentary reports of face-to-face interactions. Participants provided both subjective reports and objective logs of smartphone use, allowing us to disentangle perceived from actual device use. Study 2 extended this approach by observing real-world conversations in public cafeterias with 100 Spanish dyads, combining objective and subjective measures of smartphone use to replicate and broaden the findings. Study 3 implemented an incremental intervention designed to reduce smartphone use and enhance attention to partners during in-person interactions, drawing on another experience sampling study with over 250 participants and 20,000 momentary questionnaires completed. The study employed an ABCA' design: A = a 10-day baseline period; B = an 11-day intervention period; C = a 14-day break; and A' = a 7-day follow-up. The intervention progressively encouraged participants to give their full attention to interaction partners by: (1) prompting them in daily life to consider whether smartphone use during a face-to-face interaction was worthwhile; (2) providing a smartphone wallpaper image as a visual reminder of this question; and (3) sharing a brief video recorded by the first author outlining the pros and cons of smartphone use in face-to-face contexts.

Study 1 showed that self-report smartphone co-present use (b = -0.04, 95% CI [-0.07, -0.01], p = 0.009), but not smartphone-logged co-present use (b = 0.01, 95% CI [-0.04, 0.05], p = 0.800), was negatively associated with the quality of face-to-face interactions. Study 2 confirms the same findings showing that perceived, rather than objectively observed, smartphone use was associated with poorer interaction quality. In Study 3, compared to the control group, participants in experimental conditions reported significantly higher quality on their face-to-face interactions (b = 0.03, 95% CI [0.01, 0.05], p = 0.006), with effects increasing as participants progressed through the full intervention (b = 0.15, 95% CI [0.09, 0.22], p < 0.001). Notably, those completing the full intervention (Group 3) also showed sustained improvements during the follow-up period after the break (b = 0.29, 95% CI [0.13, 0.45], p < 0.001).

Taken together, these three studies underscore the beneficial effects of fostering mutual attention in everyday social encounters and demonstrate that theory driven, low-cost, realistic, and scalable smartphone interventions can meaningfully enhance the quality of face-to-face interactions, strengthen social bonds, and mitigate loneliness if they are clearly oriented to a specific and beneficial objective.

ICS05 At the Core of Interpersonal Relations: Questions of Closeness, Loneliness, and Dislike

PP 1174 How different types of social media use relate to loneliness compared to offline social interactions: Preliminary findings from a longitudinal study

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Social media have become deeply integrated into adults' everyday lives, making it essential to understand how their use relates to wellbeing. In this study, we examined the associations between different types of social media use (SMU) and loneliness, a key indicator of social wellbeing. While the effects of SMU are thought to depend on specific types of use and individual susceptibility variables such as personality (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013), most research has focused on either general SMU or the active-passive distinction (Zhang et al., 2022), which proved too crude to yield consistent and meaningful associations with wellbeing (Valkenburg et al., 2022). Thus, we extend previous work by distinguishing four types of SMU: direct messaging, social engagement (e.g., liking or commenting on others' posts), self-presentation (e.g., posting content), and content consumption (e.g., scrolling through feeds). We expect the more social dimensions of SMU, that is, direct messaging and social engagement, to be negatively associated with loneliness. We also consider offline social interactions (i.e., offline communication and social activities), whose effects may serve as a crucial reference point when evaluating the relative impact of SMU on loneliness (or vice-versa). Furthermore, since online interaction can be less demanding for socially anxious individuals (McKenna et al., 2002), we investigated whether social anxiety moderates the effects of direct messaging and social engagement, as well as their offline counterparts. Using structural equation modeling, we analyzed Time 1 data from an ongoing longitudinal survey among a general population sample of 3,460 Czech adults (aged 18–59, M = 39.18, SD = 11.74; 49.8% men, 0.4% other), collected in April–May 2025. Although we present cross-sectional findings here, Time 2 data (to be collected in April-May 2026) will be included for the conference presentation. Our results show that, after accounting for offline social interactions, social anxiety, and demographics, SMU is only weakly associated with adults' loneliness. The type of use also matters: direct messaging was linked to lower loneliness (β = –.05), social engagement and content consumption to higher loneliness (β = .09 and .08, respectively), and self-presentation was unrelated to loneliness. In comparison, the association of offline communication with loneliness was larger (β = –.18) while, surprisingly, participation in offline social activities was unrelated to loneliness. Social anxiety had the largest effect of all included predictors, with more anxious adults reporting higher loneliness (β = .43). It also moderated the effects of social engagement on SMU, which was associated with higher loneliness among adults with average or high (+1 SD) social anxiety but not among less anxious adults (–1 SD). Moreover, offline social activities predicted lower loneliness only among less anxious adults. The interactions between social anxiety and direct messaging or offline communication were not significant. Among demographic variables, only financial security negatively predicted loneliness (β = –.13), whereas gender, age, and education showed no significant effects. Overall, our findings underscore the importance of differentiating types of SMU and considering their conditional effects, while suggesting that their relationship with social wellbeing among adults is relatively weak.

ICS05 At the Core of Interpersonal Relations: Questions of Closeness, Loneliness, and Dislike

PP 1175 Beyond the family unit: Developing an individual parent measure of family communication for post-secondary students

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The Revised Family Communication Pattern instrument (RFCP) assess two dimensions of family communication: conformity and conversation orientations. Although widely used with adolescents and post-secondary students, the RFCP was developed and primarily validated for adolescent populations. However, compared to adolescents, most post-secondary students adapt to new academic demands, social environments, and increased independence. This raises the question about whether the RFCP adequately captures family communication processes for post-secondary students. Additionally, our research on parental relationships with students suggests that communication patterns may differ between parental figures, reflecting differences in relational roles, emotional closeness, and communication norms. Therefore, instruments that require respondents to group parental communication perceptions together may obscure meaningful differences. An individual-parent approach offers the opportunity for greater clarity and improved measurement accuracy. This paper presents the mixed-methods, multi-study approach utilized to develop and validate the new Individual Parent variation of the RFCP (RFCP-IP) for use with post-secondary students.

Three studies were conducted. Across all studies, participants were over 18 years of age and actively enrolled in a post-secondary institution in the U.K., U.S., or Australia. Participants were recruited via Prolific, an online recruitment platform, and were monetarily compensated for their time. In Study One, a total of 23 students completed an online cognitive interview examining item interpretation and response processes to the original RFCP. Participants identified difficulty responding to items that grouped parents together, leading to the adaptation of the RFCP to reference individual parental figures, the RFCP-IP.

In Study Two, 644 students completed an online survey of the RFCP-IP. This new variant's factor structure was evaluated by a confirmatory factor analysis for mothers and fathers separately. Model fits were modest: $\chi^2(298)=1235.13$, $p < .001$; CFI = .866; TLI = .854; RMSEA = .070 (90% CI .066–.074); SRMR = .065 and $\chi^2(298)= 838.03$, $p < .001$; CFI = .884; TLI = .873; RMSEA = .067 (90% CI .062–.073); SRMR = .068. for mothers and fathers respectively. Although RMSEA and SRMR values fell within acceptable ranges, CFI and TLI values were below conventional thresholds, suggesting that the model did not adequately capture the observed covariance structure, particularly for mothers. Further SEM testing indicated the measurement invariance was supported across both groups via equivalent fit indices for configural, metric, and scalar models. These overall model fits were also modest, again slightly better for fathers (CFI = .864, RMSEA = .071) than for mothers (CFI = .839, RMSEA = .075). These results suggest that the constructs were measured similarly across parental figures, allowing for meaningful comparisons of RFCP-IP subscales.

For Study Three, approximately 50% of students returned to complete a second point-in-time survey after one year. The relationship between the RFCP-IP (Study Two) and depression, anxiety, and resiliency were examined for predictive validity.

Results support the use of the RFCP-IP as a developmentally appropriate measure of family communication for post-secondary students across all three countries. Despite modest overall model fit, full measurement invariance underscores the scale's utility for parent-level analyses. The RFCP-IP offers researchers a more precise tool for examining family communication processes from a post-secondary student perspective and should be considered when working with this population.

JOS01 Perceived Influences on Journalistic Work in Central and Eastern Europe: Economic and Political Challenges

PN 01 Journalistic labor condition and precarities: Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe in the worlds of journalism study

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Over the past two decades, the media ecosystem has been profoundly reshaped by technological change, introducing new actors, cross-professional collaboration, and diverse business models. These developments coincide with high stress levels and persistent work–life imbalance (Lukan & Čehovin Zajc, 2022), placing journalism's professionalization on increasingly uncertain terrain (Rick & Hanitzsch, 2023) and reviving core sociological questions about who journalists are (Deuze, 2005) and what journalistic work means today. Using data from the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS3) (Lauerer et al., 2025), this paper examines journalists' working conditions in 17 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. While these conditions partly reflect global transformations of journalism shaped by media-system and economic change, they are also influenced by region-specific socio-political factors. Focusing on legal, social, and financial dimensions of journalism as a profession, we analyze employment status, income, working hours, workload, and membership in professional associations. Although permanent contracts remain the dominant form of employment, journalists face insecurity due to relatively low remuneration and high workloads. Low pay drives 39% of CEE countries respondents to seek additional income, while freelance journalism accounts for 16% of journalists in the region. Union membership is generally lower in CEE countries (39%) than in the overall WJS3 sample. The analysis also reveals significant cross-national variation, with notable differences in freelancing and multiple jobholding across countries. By comparing CEE countries data of WJS3, this paper explores how journalists' job profiles and labor conditions intersect, offering a comparative assessment of the ongoing transformation of journalistic work in Central and Eastern Europe.

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JOS01 Perceived Influences on Journalistic Work in Central and Eastern Europe: Economic and Political Challenges

PN 02 Perceived influences on journalistic work in Central and Eastern Europe: Economic and political challenges

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Journalists in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region face numerous challenges and are increasingly targeted by powerful political and economic actors (Peruško, Harro-Loit & Lauk, 2024). Their work is further constrained by worsening access to information sources, insufficient funding for investigative reporting, and a growing emphasis on the commercial aspects of media production. This shift has contributed to the transformation of journalistic output into "media products" governed by economic logic (Němcová Tejkalová et al., 2025). Moreover, journalists in several CEE countries are operating in contexts marked by democratic backsliding (Bermeo, 2016; Carothers & Hartnett, 2024).These developments are reflected in our findings, although national political and economic contexts continue to shape the specific circumstances in

each country. This paper first provides a theoretical framework for analyzing perceived political, economic, organizational, and social influences on journalism. It then examines relevant sections of the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS3) conducted between 2021 and 2025, in which journalists assessed and ranked the perceived influences on their professional work. As most of the countries included in WJS3 also participated in the second wave (WJS2, conducted between 2012 and 2016), the study adopts a longitudinal comparative perspective. The paper identifies and explains changes over time by comparing CEE-specific findings with aggregated results from WJS2 and WJS3.The timing of the research presents a unique opportunity to explore the shifting dynamics of journalistic influences amid two major disruptions, the global COVID-19 pandemic and escalating geopolitical tensions in the CEE region. These developments have intensified political securitization, contributed to economic decline, and generated new social challenges. Recent trends reveal a steady perceived influence of political and economic factors, with only Kosovo indicating higher mean on a 1–5 Likert scale (where 1 indicates the least important influence and 5 the most important) compared to the overall WJS3 results regarding the political influence (2.58), and Albania (2.94), Moldova (3.03) and Poland (3.13) exceeding the total average scores for economic influences on journalistic work. Procedural and organizational factors remain the most influential dimensions shaping journalistic practice in CEE, with average scores of 3.68 and 3.09, respectively. The paper contextualizes the detailed findings and interprets cross-national variations within the region.

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JOS01 Perceived Influences on Journalistic Work in Central and Eastern Europe: Economic and Political Challenges

PN 03 Trends in the perception of journalistic autonomy and media freedom in CEE countries

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Creating conditions for media freedom should form a favourable environment for editorial autonomy, which defines both the independence of the journalistic profession as a whole (external autonomy) and the freedom of an individual journalist to perform their daily work (internal autonomy) (Nygren, 2012). Both levels of editorial autonomy (external and internal) are related, and scholars emphasize the importance of autonomy at both levels, explaining that a shared understanding of professional identity and institutional independence is developed (Hamada et al., 2019). This is widely recognized as an essential requirement for the professional practice of journalism and is generally seen as a defining feature of journalism in terms of professional commitment (Deuze, 2005). Journalists in CEE countries, to varying degrees, face limitations on their professional autonomy in choosing topics and highlighting them. The study results show that journalists in the region report some of the highest levels of internal autonomy worldwide but relatively low levels of external autonomy. Tai visiškai priešinga tendencija palyginti su Šiaurės Vakarų Europos šalimis, kurios pagal Hallin ir Mancinį (2004) priskiriamos demokratiniam korporaciniam modeliui. Four CEE countries (Lithuania, Kosovo, Bulgaria, and Latvia) rank in the top 5 out of 75 countries surveyed in the WJS3 study for their internal journalists’ autonomy. However, when journalists rate their countries’ media freedom, only one CEE country – Estonia – is in the top 5. Among the 17 CEE countries, only Estonia has a marginal difference in the average perceptions of journalists on editorial autonomy and media freedom, with the largest differences in these perceptions being recorded in Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria. A comprehensive assessment of media freedom in a country is quite a complex matter when it comes to generalizing the situation across the entire media system, where there may be both editorial offices with complete autonomy and those where journalists are constantly obliged to comply with prevailing political, economic, and other interests. Thus, the freedom of CEE media systems with more contrasting levels of editorial autonomy may be assessed much more critically than those where the levels of autonomy of different editorial offices are perceived as more equal.

JOS01 Perceived Influences on Journalistic Work in Central and Eastern Europe: Economic and Political Challenges

PN 04 Journalists' safety: Experiences of threats and perceptions of impunity

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This paper examines journalists' perceptions of and experiences with safety threats across 17 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, focusing on four dimensions of safety: physical, psychological, digital, and financial, in line with the conceptual framework developed by Slavtcheva-Petkova et al. (2023). Journalists' safety has become an increasingly pressing issue globally, particularly in regions characterised by democratic backsliding, political polarisation, and growing hostility towards the media. In the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (2021–2025), safety-related questions were included for the first time, allowing for a systematic and comparative assessment of journalists' safety conditions across diverse media systems. Using survey data from the Worlds of Journalism Study, this chapter ranks the 17 CEE countries according to journalists' reported experiences across the four safety dimensions, as well as their overall safety scores. The analysis documents the prevalence and forms of safety threats encountered by journalists, ranging from physical intimidation and psychological harassment to digital attacks and financial insecurity. In addition, the chapter examines journalists' coping mechanisms, perceptions of freedom of expression, assessments of impunity for crimes committed against journalists, and individual and collective forms of resilience. The findings reveal significant cross-national variation, shaped by political, economic, and institutional contexts, while also pointing to shared regional patterns of vulnerability. Safety threats are shown to be closely intertwined with broader constraints on media freedom and professional autonomy. By foregrounding journalists' own experiences and perceptions, the chapter highlights safety as a foundational condition for the practice of independent journalism. Overall, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics of journalistic safety in CEE and underscores the need for strengthened legal, institutional, and professional support mechanisms to safeguard press freedom and ensure the long-term sustainability of journalism under challenging conditions.

JOS02 Public Service Media

PP 0029 Between values and logics: Public service journalism in the age of platform-oriented content creation – the case of "funk"

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"We're always kind of asking ourselves: do we go for a really wild statement — like some TikTokers do […] kick it off with some rage bait and then I react to it […] or do we do it the way I learned it in journalism […]." ***[1]***

Across national and international research findings, the shift from linear to non-linear news consumption on platforms is one of the defining trends in contemporary journalism. Public broadcasters seeking to remain relevant must therefore venture beyond the confines of their traditional media environment and fully confront the consequences of new media logics. More diverse distribution strategies require not only technical transformation but also challenge long-established routines and a professional ethos grounded in objectivity and neutrality. While these journalistic "god-terms" (Zelizer, 2004) have often been misused e.g., to marginalize certain perspectives (Lünenborg & Medeiros, 2021) platform logics and recommender systems have turned demands for plurality into a marketing resource. This paper examines the processes and consequences for everyday work of so-called content creators producing for funk, the online network jointly operated by German public service broadcasters ARD and ZDF. It also analyzes how this form of creative practice reshapes notions of journalistic quality and professional self-understanding.

The study draws on semi-structured interviews with funk's commissioning editors and all ten newly recruited content creators. Using thematic analysis, we examine how creators make sense of their identity in the hybrid space between institutional journalism and creator culture. Although many had substantial editorial experience, interview data show that journalistic competence was not the decisive hiring criterion. Instead, funk prioritized applicants who "had their own vibe[2]", a distinct, memorable presence.

We conceptualize this orientation through van Zoonen's (2012) notion of "*I*-pistemology," which captures a shift toward personality-infused modes of knowledge production aligned with new media logics (Chadwick, 2017). Within funk's environment, *I*-pistemology becomes a productive resource enabling creators to build relational proximity with audiences accustomed to influencers offering subjective framing rather than traditional journalistic detachment.

However, this approach also generates friction. Creators who see themselves anchored in journalism must navigate a delicate balance between platform-native performance cues and the journalistic expectation to produce accurate and relevant

information. Several creators described the constant challenge of staying visible within algorithmic recommendation systems while upholding the journalistic values emphasized during their training.

We argue that these tensions reflect a broader transformation of public service media within platformized media ecologies. Funk's strategy does not signify a break with journalism but rather its reconfiguration under platform conditions. By analyzing how creators articulate and negotiate their hybrid roles, this paper contributes to debates on platformization and the future of PSM. The case of funk demonstrates that maintaining relevance increasingly requires navigating and partly adopting the logics of the creator economy, thereby reshaping professional identity and institutional practice within contemporary digital publics.

1. Interview with one of funk's journalistic talents, Dec. 16th 2025. Translation by author.
2. "Vibe" is not a translation but the original phrasing used in the interview conducted in German.

JOS02 Public Service Media

PP 0030 Reporting on populists as challenge for Public Service Media: The audience perspective

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Reporting on populists poses a challenge for Public Service Media (PSM). Unlike commercial media, PSM are mandated by their public service remit to ensure diversity of opinion and impartiality (European Broadcasting Union, 2014). When confronted with actors whose ideology challenges liberal-democratic principles (Mudde, 2007), the public service remit becomes difficult to reconcile: the obligation to represent all relevant voices may directly conflict with the duty to safeguard democratic and pluralist discourse. This creates a "democratic dilemma" (Hien & Norman, 2023, p. 1162) requiring PSM to balance inclusivity, pluralism and impartiality with the protection of human dignity.

Against this background, the question arises as to how PSM should deal with populist parties. Research has just begun to address how PSM journalists navigate this dilemma and understand their role in this context (ANONYMIZED). However, there is still limited knowledge about how the public – as PSM are meant to serve them as the audience – perceives this issue. Therefore, drawing on the theoretical concept of journalistic roles and extending it to the coverage of populism, this study takes an audience's perspective and asks what role the public expects PSM to adopt in reporting on populist parties.

The study draws on a cross-national survey in an online access panel conducted in Germany, France, Poland and the United Kingdom – four large European media markets differing in media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and in their political treatment of populist parties (Wettstein et al., 2018) – using quota samples of 1,000 respondents per country.

As this study is a work in progress, by the time of the conference, initial results will be available. The study will contribute empirically and theoretically to the field of PSM and populism research by providing empirical evidence on the audience perspective including different groups within the countries (e.g., political orientation, age, gender, media use) as well as international comparisons; by applying the concept of journalistic roles to audience expectations regarding PSMs' coverage of populism; and by advancing debates on the public service remit in heterogeneous and politically divided societies.

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JOS02 Public Service Media

PP 0031 Public expectation, evaluations, and satisfaction with public service media in the Czech Republic

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Public service media (PSM) are created, funded, and controlled by the public and for the public. However, current research on PSM still focuses primarily on policy regulations and innovation strategies. On the contrary, the public perspective remains neglected, even though in recent years we have seen calls from researchers for a shift towards the audience (Swart et al., 2022). Furthermore, we argue that the legitimacy of PSM cannot be understood solely as a top-down process, but

rather as a perception that is co-constructed in interaction with other stakeholders, including the audience (Fehlmann, 2023).

The aim of this study is to address this gap in research and explore PSM perception from the public perspective. The research focuses primarily on the concept of media satisfaction and expands its traditional conception as a post-consumption evaluation of content (Patwardhan et al., 2011) towards a more general affective attitude of citizens towards PSM as a public institution, which can arise independently of direct media experience and is closely linked to the perceived fulfillment of the role of PSM.

The study draws on data from a representative survey of the adult population in the Czech Republic (N = 1700), where PSM are, on the one hand, a stable and successful part of the local media system and, on the other hand, face increasing criticism from populist politicians and their voters. Using a combination of descriptive analysis and multiple linear regression, the study examines the public's expectations of normative role of PSM, evaluations of the normative role fulfillment, and factors contributing to overall satisfaction with PSM, including not only aspects related to normative role fulfillment but also so-called cohesive role fulfillment—their capacity to represent and defend in-group identities (Smejkal et al., 2022).

The results show that, in the view of the public, the most important normative roles of PSM are to provide impartial and accurate information, educate the audience, and promote national culture. In contrast, paying attention to various minorities was considered one of the least important normative roles of PSM. The greatest discrepancy between expectations and evaluation appears in relation to the provision of accurate and impartial information. In contrast, the discrepancies for entertainment, educational, and cultural roles are much smaller, which suggests that PSM normative role fulfillment connected to non-news content is perceived more positively. Finally, regression analysis indicates that overall satisfaction with PSM is mainly influenced by the perceived fulfillment of its information, entertainment, and public forum roles. When broader societal satisfaction and socio-psychological characteristics were included in the model, normative and cohesive role fulfilment, together with PSM consumption, remained the strongest predictors, with broader societal satisfaction contributing only weakly. The study thus shows that public satisfaction with PSM is built primarily through the perceived quality of their performance, rather than through the political attitudes of individuals.

JOS02 Public Service Media

PP 0032 Negativity pays – even for public service media: Engagement and sentiment patterns of news posts and user comments on TikTok

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As journalism becomes increasingly embedded in short-video platforms such as TikTok, news organizations face a fundamental dilemma: how to translate established news values into environments where algorithmic engagement logics structure visibility and relevance. *Negativity* is among the most robust news values in classic and revised accounts of what counts as "news" (Harcup & O'Neill, 2017), and recent large-scale evidence shows that negativity reliably drives online news consumption (Robertson et al., 2023). Yet we still know little about how negativity operates in platformed news publics shaped by algorithmic curation and interest clustering (Gerbaudo, 2024) – and especially how it structures audience interaction in comment spaces. Building on journalism's "emotional turn" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020), this study examines negativity as an affective resource for engagement on TikTok, with special attention to public service media (PSM) and the platform pressures that may challenge their public value-driven, audience-facing performance in digital environments (Sehl, 2020).

Empirically, the study analyzes a multilingual dataset of TikTok news content from 21 prominent publishers across Germany, France, the UK, Switzerland, and Austria, including PSM outlets (e.g., BBC News, Tagesschau, Franceinfo) and private news organizations (e.g., GB News, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Le Monde*). The dataset comprises 10,341 news posts and 509,759 user comments published between 10/2024 and 09/2025 and collected via the TikTok Research API. Negativity is operationalized as affective polarity in both posts (captions and voice-to-text transcripts) and user comments using transformer-based multilingual sentiment classification, leveraging open-source large language models designed for social media sentiment analysis (Barbieri et al., 2022). Multilevel models account for comments nested within posts and publishers and estimate associations with engagement outcomes while avoiding causal claims about editorial intent.

Results show that negativity is pervasive (63.7% of PSM and 65.0% of private posts are negative; among scored comments, 57.0% are negative). Negativity is particularly pronounced in English-language posts and comments, compared to more neutral French and German news posts. Negative posts are associated with markedly higher engagement: compared with non-negative posts, negative news videos receive about +47% views, +49% likes, +62% shares, and +47% more comments (log models; exp(β)−1). Crucially, this pattern is stronger for PSM than for private media: the estimated negativity–views association is +61.8% for PSM versus +26.3% for private outlets, indicating that platform visibility incentives discipline engagement strategies across ownership models. Comment dynamics mirror this affective logic. Negative comments receive slightly more likes (+3.4%) but substantially more replies (+8.8%), and endorsement is conditional: negative comments

are especially liked when they align with the post's sentiment (comm_neg × post_neg interaction, $p < .001$), suggesting a process of affective *sentiment matching* as a mechanism of audience participation.

A limitation is that publisher-level comparisons are based on a modest set of outlets (N = 21), so results should be interpreted as platform-conditioned associations rather than definitive institutional effects. Overall, the study shows how TikTok's algorithmic interest clustering and engagement metrics convert negativity into a cross-organizational and cross-linguistic visibility resource, tightening platform constraints on journalistic autonomy – including within public service media.

JOS02 Public Service Media

PP 0033 The challenge of strategic dis-integration: How fact-checkers are adapting to platform retreat

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The abrupt end of Meta's US fact-checking partnerships in early 2025 was only the most dramatic step in what fact-checkers see as an ongoing, systematic "retreat" by platform companies from anti-disinformation efforts (e.g. Drobnic Holan 2025; Jiménez Cruz 2025). This disengagement by the major platforms — especially Meta and Google — that have profoundly shaped the field's evolution raises basic questions about how fact-checking organizations are adapting to a rapidly shifting strategic landscape, and how their mission and identity will evolve to reflect those changes.

Direct and indirect funding from Meta, Google, TikTok and other tech firms been a primary engine of the field's expansion over the last decade, with Meta's partnership alone providing more than $100 million to fact-checkers since its inception in 2016 (Leingang 2025). Beyond financial incentives, the partnerships have helped fact-checkers achieve impact and scale in addressing disinformation, strengthen accountability and governance regimes for platform companies, and draw greater public attention to their work. At the same time, the alliance with Meta and other platforms has had well-known drawbacks for fact-checkers, ranging from online harassment and attacks by major public figures to imposing constraints on who and how they check. Practitioners have understood these relationships as providing essential leverage while limiting their autonomy (Belair-Gagnon et al. 2023; Vinhas and Bastos 2023).

This study examines the consequences of the cessation of Meta's pivotal program and the strategies developed to navigate a wider landscape of diminished funding, heightened political attacks, and strategic retreat by key institutional stakeholders. Drawing on a qualitative analysis of 27 in-depth interviews across five continents, we explore how fact-checking organizations are adapting to a post-platform context. While the Meta partnership remains in effect for now outside of the United States, our interviews confirm that fact-checkers around the world are actively reconfiguring day-to-day efforts as well as long-term strategies for a world in which platform companies are no longer primary strategic allies.

In this way, the paper analyzes what happens when an emerging field becomes institutionalized around a central axis — the reach and resources of major platforms — and those defining relationships begin to erode. We suggest that the set of challenges faced by fact-checking organizations today can be understood as platform dis-integration: in a very literal way, reversing the tight integration with these firms that has profoundly shaped the mission and practices of individual fact-checkers as well as field-wide norms and governance mechanisms (Lauer and Graves 2025).

Our findings point to four ongoing strategic shifts which fact-checkers understand as marking a return to foundational principles: 1) An editorial agenda stressing new formats and a public service focus (e.g. deeper investigations, political fact-checking, exposing scams); 2) community-building strategies to "reconnect with our community" (newsletters, membership programs, etc.); 3) public branding campaigns to directly counter the "censorship" narrative; and 4) wider avenues of impact (e.g. accountability audits, policy work, etc.). We analyze these shifts in light of the specific socio-political context different organizations face and conclude with recommendations for future research.

JOS03 AI and Audiences I.

PP 0034 How do users perceive AI news? The effects of AI authorship cues on credibility perceptions and message selection likelihood

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News organizations around the world are increasingly incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into various stages of the news production cycle. While generative AI offers clear benefits—such as reducing errors, supporting fact-checking, personalizing content, expanding topic diversity, and saving time—it also raises significant concerns. These include dependency on tech platforms (e.g., OpenAI), risks of algorithmic bias, misinformation (e.g., hallucinations), and reduced opinion diversity (Simon, 2022).

Against this background, the question arises: How do audiences respond to the use of AI in journalism—particularly when AI is presented explicitly as the (co-)author of news content? Of particular interest in this context is how AI authorship cues shape perceived credibility and, in turn, influence news selection. Over the past decade, researchers have conducted

various experiments to compare audience perceptions of AI- vs. human-written news. However, findings remain mixed: while several studies show a preference for human authors (e.g., Zoizner et al., 2025) others suggest that AI-generated content can, under certain conditions, be seen as equally or even more credible (Cloudy et al., 2022). One explanation for these contradicting results lies in the activation of the machine heuristic—a mental shortcut suggesting that computers, software, or other machine agents are inherently objective, neutral accurate, and free from ideological bias. When activated, or present, this heuristic can lead users to perceive AI-generated content as more credible than human-written news, due to the assumption that machines lack hidden agendas or self-interest (Sundar, 2008). This trust in machine-generated content may have important consequences for user behavior, particularly among individuals who are generally skeptical of traditional journalistic sources or who tend to avoid content that contradicts their existing attitudes (Cloudy et al., 2022). Since most people rely on heuristics during news consumption (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013), AI authorship cues that activate the machine heuristic could enhance perceived credibility and increase selection likelihood.

In this paper, we thus investigate how different types of authorship cues (human, AI, and AI-assisted) affect the likelihood of selecting a journalistic news item, to what extent perceived credibility of the author and the message mediates this process, and how attitudes toward generative AI (dispositional machine heuristic) influence these relationships. To do so, we conducted seven parallel pre-registered between-subjects online experiments (N = 6,000) in Germany with three experimental conditions regarding authorship cues accompanying a news headline (human journalist vs. AI vs. human journalist with help from AI) for seven different media brands (*ARD-Tagesschau, Die Welt, taz, SZ, Focus Online, BILD, FAZ*). Results show that positive attitudes toward generative AI significantly increase perceived credibility of AI-generated content and its selection likelihood, whereas negative attitudes reduce both. These findings underscore the significance of preexisting attitudes toward generative AI in the selective exposure to AI-authored news, offering implications for the integration of AI into journalistic practices.

JOS03 AI and Audiences I.

PP 0035 Reading the algorithmic zeitgeist: Epistemic shifts and post-trust journalism in the age of AI

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This paper theorises the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on journalism as an epistemic transformation rather than a purely technological or organisational one. Situated within a broader condition of post-trust, the study argues that AI intensifies and stabilises existing crises of credibility, authority, and meaning-making that already characterise contemporary media ecosystems (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). At this moment of shifting grounds, journalism is confronted not merely with new tools, but with a reconfiguration of how knowledge is produced, validated, and recognised as legitimate in the public sphere.

Drawing on cultural diagnostics and trend studies (Gomes et al., 2018; Dragt, 2017), the article conceptualises AI as part of an "algorithmic zeitgeist": a constellation of cultural logics, affective regimes, and epistemic assumptions shaping journalistic practice and audience interpretation. Rather than treating AI as an external disruptor, the paper examines how its integration into newswork exposes latent tensions between speed and verification, automation and judgment, scale and accountability (Carlson, 2015; Diakopoulos, 2019).

Methodologically, the paper is grounded in a qualitative trend-mapping process structured through the Trend Research Kit (Flores, 2024), which combines desk research, focus groups, and participatory workshops. The desk research synthesised academic literature, innovation reports, and media lab outputs to identify recurrent signals of change at the intersection of AI, journalism, and digital culture. These signals were subsequently interpreted and stress-tested through focus groups with journalists, editors, and media professionals from diverse organisational contexts, allowing professional experience to confront and refine emerging patterns. Finally, workshops translated these insights into speculative scenarios and conceptual prototypes, enabling the identification of underlying epistemic tensions rather than predictive claims. This triangulated approach positions trend analysis as a form of epistemic inquiry, attentive to weak signals, contradictions, and meaning structures that often elude conventional empirical measurement.

As one of the the results, four interrelated epistemic trend narratives structure the analysis. (1) *The age of post-trust* describes a shift from institutional credibility to fragmented, affect-driven, and algorithmically mediated forms of belief, where trust is negotiated through platforms, identities, and recommendation systems rather than professional authority. (2) *The paradox of efficiency* captures how AI-driven productivity promises coexist with increased cognitive load, editorial fatigue, and a redistribution of epistemic labour onto journalists tasked with supervising automated outputs. (3) *Alpha + Ctrl+Z audiences* highlights generational modes of sense-making marked by volatility, irony, and aesthetic coding, challenging journalism's traditional claims to coherence, linearity, and factual closure. Finally, (4) *the syndrome of technosalvation* interrogates dominant narratives that frame AI as a remedy for journalism's legitimacy crisis, obscuring the political, ethical, and structural conditions underlying epistemic erosion (Morozov, 2013).

The paper contributes to Journalism Studies by reframing AI as an epistemic actor that reshapes norms of truth, authorship, and responsibility, rather than a neutral instrument of innovation. It connects post-trust theory with newsroom realities and

positions trend studies as a reflexive, interdisciplinary methodology capable of informing journalism research, professional practice, and media policy.

JOS03 AI and Audiences I.

PP 0036 Where do citizens draw the line in their support for AI in journalism? Evidence from a survey experiment in Norway and the U.S.

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In line with the notion of technological development, journalism and journalism studies have seen a massive surge in commentaries, advice, warnings, and discussions of AI. A general sentiment seems to be that journalism needs to "brace for the impact of artificial intelligence" (Møller et al., 2025, p. 1373). With that as a starting point, scholars have covered normative and ethical aspects, researched what journalists and others think about AI, analysed the actual news coverage of AI, and studied how different technologies using AI have been tested and used by news companies (see Sarısakaloğlu, 2025, for a recent review).

In this situation, amid rapid innovation, public support for AI applications in journalism remains understudied. While there is a growing literature providing audience perspectives on AI in journalism (e.g., Newman et al., 2025; Mitova et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2025; Toff & Simon, 2024), we still know little about the extent to which audiences want AI in journalism and where they draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable use of AI in journalism. We extend the growing literature in journalism studies on AI by using a comparative survey experiment with nationally representative data (online quota sampling) in Norway (N = 1040) and the United States (N = 1500) to provide comparative evidence on public support for AI in journalism. Through a between-subject 2 (news provider) x 6 (type of AI application) design, we test the relative effects of six AI applications in journalism that vary from widely used AI applications (e.g., text summarization) to more controversial ones (e.g., synthetic news anchors). Our dependent measure is an item measuring support for the implementation of an AI application on a scale from 1 (Do not support at all) to 5 (Fully support).

We find that audiences remain skeptical about adopting various AI applications, including those already widely used in journalism. Public support for AI applications in news production is generally low in Norway and the US (i.e., the highest mean is 2.68 on the five-point scale of our dependent measure of support), though AI applications for summarization and translation receive statistically significantly greater support than general front-page personalization, political front-page personalization, image generation, or synthetic anchors.

We also find Norwegians being statistically significantly more supportive of summarization, image generation, and synthetic anchors compared with Americans. One possible explanation for these differences may relate to a generally optimistic, if not deterministic, belief in the upside of exploiting new technologies in the Norwegian context. Research into Nordic media systems has underlined how established media companies have been seen as trusted keepers of publicist ideals at home, while utilizing cutting-edge technologies and new market opportunities in their different markets to support their news activities (e.g., Syvertsen et al., 2014, with Schibsted as a main example).

Taken together, our findings indicate that, while AI is increasingly important in journalism, audiences across the two countries studied are skeptical about adopting various AI-driven news services.

JOS03 AI and Audiences I.

PP 0037 Audience perceptions of the objectivity of fully automated, automated post-edited, and human-written news articles: Evidence from a population-based survey experiment

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In a world where increasing amounts of information have made capturing audience attention more difficult, news organisations have sought to produce content more quickly and at lower cost. Automated journalism has emerged as one approach to do this and is increasingly adopted by newsrooms and media organisations worldwide. While its implementation can increase the speed, scale, and efficiency of news production, it has also reignited debates, particularly regarding the journalistic norm of objectivity.

The proponents of automated journalism often invoke the promise of *algorithmic objectivity*. They claim that computational systems may reduce human bias and produce more neutral, factual news content. In contrast, critical scholarship has argued that automation algorithms are programmed and trained by humans and therefore prone to reproducing existing biases. Despite this theoretical debate, empirical evidence on how audiences perceive the objectivity of automated news remains mixed and fragmented. This may be a result of factors including divergent conceptualisations of objectivity, the experimental use of evaluation criteria developed for traditional media, and how comparisons have been made across different news genres.

This study investigates how machine authorship affects audience perceptions of objectivity in news articles. The research addresses three primary issues: (1) how machine authorship influences perceptions of objectivity; (2) whether this influence varies across different news topics; and (3) the relationship between the level of automation and the likability of an article, as mediated by objectivity perceptions.

The study uses data from a large-scale, between-subjects online survey experiment carried out in the United Kingdom (N = 4,734). Participants were exposed to one news article without its authorship revealed. The experiment used 36 articles in total, comprising fully automated, automated post-edited, and human-written versions of 12 stories. Audience perceptions were measured using criteria specifically developed—in a focus group study—for data-driven news. In this set of perception criteria, objectivity is operationalised as a multidimensional construct, measured through five dimensions: balance, accuracy, source credibility, factuality, and sensationalism.

The findings show that machine authorship does not have a uniform effect on perceived objectivity. Overall, minor but significant differences were found in respondents' perceptions of the articles' factuality and source transparency. Specifically, higher levels of automation increased audience satisfaction. However, the effects varied in magnitude and focus depending on the news topic. Regarding article likability, a mediation analysis reveals that although audiences generally find fully automated articles less appealing, they do recognise and appreciate aspects of objectivity in them.

This study provides a closer examination of audience perceptions of automated journalism through a new set of lenses. It addresses potential confounds that may have contributed to inconsistent findings in previous research and includes automated post-edited articles in the comparison—a form that is widely used in practice but largely overlooked in scholarship. The findings reveal how automation can impact aspects of objectivity but that those impacts vary across news topics. For practitioners, the results suggest automation practices may need to be tailored topic-by-topic. For researchers, the study underscores the multidimensional nature of objectivity and the importance of using reasonably large sets of experimental stimuli.

JOS03 AI and Audiences I.

PP 0038 Investigating the impact of AI-rewritten news articles on reader engagement, comprehension, and interest across six countries

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Public interest in news has declined in many countries in the last 10 years, inequality in news use has grown, and news avoidance is increasingly common. While low news use is often the result of structural inequalities in access (e.g., due to formal education, social class, etc.), many news avoiders also cite factors associated with the style and character of news content: news can feel boring, confusing, or hard to understand. We test whether large language models (LLMs) can serve as a scalable accessibility intervention by rewriting existing reporting to be clearer and more engaging for readers, while keeping the underlying information constant.

We conducted a preregistered online survey experiment fielded by YouGov in June-July 2025 across six countries and five languages (UK, USA, France, Argentina, Denmark, and Japan, N ≈ 2,000 per country). Participants were randomly assigned to read either an original newswire article about global financial stability risks or an AI-rewritten version of the same article produced with ChatGPT o3. The rewrite prompt targeted readers who typically find news 'boring or confusing' and imposed strict constraints aiming to alter the presentation rather than the content: the rewritten text had to match the original length, preserve direct quotes verbatim, simplify vocabulary and sentence structure, break down complex concepts and causal chains, and explicitly state why the story matters, without adding new information or changing the meaning.

The outcomes we measured were time spent on the article page and immediate post-reading ratings of perceived ease of understanding and interest. In all countries and languages, the AI-rewritten article was rated as: (i) significantly easier to understand and (ii) more interesting than the original, with (iii) broadly similar positive effects across participants with higher versus lower education and higher versus lower prior interest in news. Contrary to our preregistered hypothesis, the rewrite did not increase time spent reading. However, exploratory mediation analyses using a structural equation model suggest the null effect on reading time reflects two countervailing pathways: the rewritten article was quicker to read because it was easier but also held attention longer because it was more interesting, with the two effects cancelling each other out.

Overall, our findings provide cross-national evidence that LLM-based rewriting of news, which is distinct from summarisation or fully AI-generated news, can improve the perceived accessibility and interest of hard-news reporting at scale across countries and languages, with no decrease in engagement among avid news consumers. Thus, AI may be able to help address some of the most pressing challenges facing news and democracy in the coming years.

JOS04 Trust and Journalism

PP 0048 Expressive distrust: Rethinking what it means to distrust the news

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Research on media trust has long grappled with conceptual and empirical puzzles, such as why distrust does not necessarily reduce news consumption and why trust and distrust often appear ambivalent. This paper introduces the concept of expressive distrust to address these challenges and expand current theorization. Drawing on qualitative interviews with Swedish social media users who publicly criticize news media, we argue that distrust should not be understood solely as an attitudinal stance but also as a performative practice embedded in identity work, group belonging, and political strategy.

Expressive distrust refers to signals of distrust that serve purposes beyond evaluating journalistic performance – such as signaling cognitive virtue, reinforcing social ties, or influencing public discourse. Our findings reveal that individuals often articulate nuanced and even respectful views of journalism in private, while performing categorical distrust in public arenas. This performative posture functions as symbolic capital: it marks independence and critical sophistication, fosters community belonging, and operates as a strategic tool in struggles over media policy and political hegemony. Importantly, these performances coexist with continued news use, resolving the paradox of the "distruster-consumer" documented in previous research.

Conceptually, the paper challenges linear models that treat trust and distrust as opposite ends of a continuum. Instead, we propose a framework that incorporates a performative axis cutting across existing typologies of skepticism and cynicism. Methodologically, our analysis underscores the limitations of survey-based measures that treat self-reports as transparent indicators of trust. We suggest multimethod approaches that combine interpretivist analysis with behavioral data and designs sensitive to audience and context.

By theorizing expressive distrust, this paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of media skepticism in the current conjuncture – one shaped by platformized attention economies, populist epistemic repertoires, and identity-driven signaling practices. Recognizing the performative dimension of distrust is crucial for explaining why distrust persists despite high news use and for designing research that captures the complexity of trust-talk in contemporary media environments.

JOS04 Trust and Journalism

PP 0049 Highly trusted yet still threatened: Journalistic responses to fake news and disinformation in Norway and Iceland

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Concerns about fake news, disinformation, and the erosion of truth have become central to contemporary debates about journalism and democratic public spheres. Existing research on these challenges has commonly focused on polarized political environments, low-trust media systems, or contexts where journalism is institutionally weakened. Far less attention has been paid to how journalists operating in high-trust media systems, with strong professional norms and comparatively robust public support, understand and respond to post-truth pressures. This study addresses this gap by examining journalists in Norway and Iceland, two Nordic media systems that combine high public trust, extensive traditions of professional journalism, and high levels of traditional news consumption, yet differ markedly in market size, media structure, and funding regimes. As such, these cases constitute analytically valuable "least-likely" contexts for examining journalistic responses to disinformation and fake news.

Empirically, this study draws on sixteen semi-structured interviews with journalists in Norway and Iceland, conducted between late 2023 and early 2024. The interview sample spans a range of media organizations, professional roles, beats, and seniority levels, enabling systematic comparison across national contexts while remaining sensitive to institutional and market-specific differences. The interviews focus on journalists' experiences with fake news and disinformation, their definitions of these phenomena, perceived sources and threats, and their assessments of appropriate professional and institutional responses. The qualitative design allows for in-depth analysis of journalistic norms, professional self-understandings, and boundary work in a post-truth context.

The findings reveal a high degree of convergence in how journalists across the two countries conceptualize and respond to disinformation, despite important differences in media system structure and economic conditions. Journalists consistently distinguish between misinformation as unintentional error and disinformation as deliberate deception, though Norwegian journalists tend to emphasize intentionality, while Icelandic journalists place greater weight on the news-like appearance of false information. Social media platforms are widely perceived as the primary arenas for dissemination, with foreign actors frequently highlighted as key sources. At the same time, journalists openly acknowledge that professional journalism itself can function as a vector for both deliberate disinformation and accidental misinformation, particularly under conditions of time pressure, high workload, and limited resources.

Rather than advocating technological fixes or fundamentally new professional paradigms, journalists in both countries overwhelmingly emphasize a renewed commitment to core journalistic principles, accuracy, contextualization, ethical accountability, and rigorous fact-checking, as the most effective response to post-truth challenges. Fact-checking initiatives are viewed primarily as resources for strengthening everyday journalistic practice rather than as standalone solutions, underscoring the continued legitimacy of traditional professional norms.

This study contributes to journalism studies by demonstrating that post-truth pressures are not confined to lower-trust or highly polarized contexts, and by showing that professional journalistic ideals remain resilient in analytically "least-likely" cases. By foregrounding journalists' own interpretations and practices, the study extends existing research beyond platform-centered or audience-focused approaches. Societally, the findings highlight that maintaining public trust in journalism depends not only on combating disinformation externally, but also on safeguarding the institutional conditions that enable journalists to uphold professional standards.

JOS04 Trust and Journalism

PP 0050 Great expectations? What happens to media trust when audiences' journalistic role expectations are violated

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Scholarly research on journalistic roles has largely examined journalists' role orientations and performance, and yet calls are growing to also analyze audience role expectations and their implications for journalistic trust (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Banjac, Juarez-Miro, & Hanusch, 2024). This study responds to that challenge. Anchored in the theoretical lenses of role theory and expectancy violations theory (EVT), which differentiates positive and negative violations and anticipates attitudinal consequences when expectations are breached (Burgoon & Jones, 1976), this study examines whether Singapore news audiences' expectations for four journalistic roles (monitorial, collaborative, interventionist, accommodative) are met or violated, and whether violations are associated with news media trust. This complements comparative work linking audience expectations to journalists' orientations (Riedl & Eberl, 2020) and extends prior Singapore evidence on audiences' journalistic role expectations (Tandoc & Duffy, 2016).

Adopting validated journalistic role measures from the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2019), we conducted an online national survey of 600 adult Singapore residents (average age = 43.94, SD = 13.86; 48.9% female; 48.1% with bachelor's degree). The respondents rated how much journalists *should* perform each role (expectations) and how much journalists *perform* each role (performance). Then, we computed gap scores (expectation – performance) to operationalize expectancy violations consistent with EVT (Banjac et al., 2024). Trust in local media and journalists (based on two items) is the dependent variable, controlling for traditional, online, and social news use.

Paired samples t-tests show role-specific violations: Monitorial expectations exceeded perceived performance (Mexp = 3.41; Mperf = 3.28; $t = 4.169$, $p < .001$), indicating a negative violation. The collaborative role was overperformed relative to expectations (Mexp = 3.43; Mperf = 3.62; $t = -5.309$, $p < .001$), a positive violation. The interventionist role showed a small overperformance (Mexp = 3.33; Mperf = 3.38; $t = -1.851$, $p = .032$), while accommodative expectations were met (Mexp = 3.51; Mperf = 3.51; $t = 0.00$, $p = .500$).

Next, we sought to predict trust in the news media, controlling for media use and accounting for gaps between journalistic role expectation and performance. The regression model is significant, $F(7, 593) = 21.49$, $p < .001$, accounting for 19% of the variance. Traditional and social media news use were both positively related to news media trust. Focusing on the expectation-performance gap, the collaborative role gap was positively related ($b = .126$, $p = .002$) while the accommodative role gap was negatively related ($b = -.132$, $p = .004$). Gaps in monitorial and interventionist role were not related.

This study demonstrates the value of modelling role expectations as relational, context-dependent constructs and treating their violations as antecedents of media trust (Banjac et al., 2024). We also show that not all role violations carry the same trust consequences: in Singapore's context, marked by high levels of government trust and a history of state regulation of the media, collaborative overperformance appears to bolster legitimacy, whereas accommodative underperformance undermines it. These results enrich comparative role scholarship and offer a template for expectation-based analyses in other media systems.

JOS04 Trust and Journalism

PP 0051 When researchers open up to journalists: How learning and reflective practices can bridge the theory-practice divide in journalism

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This presentation shows the first findings of two journalism scholars who seek to address the theory-practice divide in journalism (studies) by actively engaging in learning and reflective activities with professionals in the Netherlands, when sharing

the findings from their dissertations. Both authors, each with their own focus on creativity and innovation in journalism, and each with their own methods, actively engaged with journalists when communicating the results of their research. The journalists where stimulated to contemplate and verbalise their potential 'next steps' or possible solutions to the issues and challenges at hand as presented.

This is a qualitative, exploratory study on research dissemination in journalism. The authors used different forms of interactive workshops (first author), and training sessions and guided reflection practices (second author) to disseminate their research findings on different occasions in the course of 2025. All journalists' comments, feedback, and reflections on these dissemination activities – including also the reflections of the researchers on these activities - have resulted in two qualitative datasets, one per author. Both were analysed in search of patterns, using an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The first findings show that this active engagement appears to be fruitful as a result of at least four factors: the practice-based orientation of the research, journalists' immediate recognition of the findings, active and collective learning in the here and now, as well as the facilitated time and safe space outside the workplace. Journalists, it appears, are quite eager to discuss the research findings.

By actively exploring new ways to address the much debated theory-practice divide in journalism, we answer to the call of Wilner et al. (2025) to start "the continued cooperation of academics and journalists, as we strive to fulfill our joint purpose of strengthening journalism" (2025: 1620). By pursuing this cooperation in a "responsive and reflective" fashion, we also follow Lewis (2020: 681). Seeking to bridge this divide appears more relevant than ever as journalism worldwide has multiple crises and challenges to meet. Only those news media which are resilient enough, we argue, will survive as news organisations in the long term.

The first findings seem to indicate that the theory-practice divide is not necessarily always there. This may be the result of adopting a different role as a researcher than usual. Instead of telling professionals what their world looks like, researchers can also opt to open up more, creating a dialogue from which can be learned. That way new knowledge can arise, benefitting both journalists and researchers.

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JOS04 Trust and Journalism

PP 0052 Protecting academic reputation under the risk of a scandal: How researchers disconnect from affective reputation-threatening experiences of digital harassment in their interactions with journalists

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Researchers are increasingly exposed to digital harassment when they communicate their knowledge to the public through different media, which make them turn to self-censoring practices and withdraw from media engagements (Olson & Lapoe 2018; Celuch et al. 2021). Previous research shows that researchers are particularly affected by severe forms of digital harassment aimed at compromising their personal security (e.g., through digital death threats or stalking) (Ferber, 2017; Gosse et al., 2021).

However, this paper argues instead that researchers are primarily affected by forms of digital harassment in which their professional reputation has been undermined by journalists, politicians, or online debaters in a public media debate shaped by dissatisfaction with authorities (Branford et al., 2019), rumors and gossip (Hammarlin & Jönsson 2017), and politicization of research (Donois, 2025). Such experiences particularly include digital rumor-spreading causing researchers to feel misrepresented, humiliated or lacking control over their academic reliability. Thus, the harmful aspect of digital harassment is linked to the experience or threat of being placed at a focal point of a potential mediated scandal (Hammarlin 2021; Thompson 2008), thereby undermining the very foundation of researchers' work- namely, their research integrity.

In an effort to sustain their obliged engagement in public outreach without having their academic reputation misrepresented, misunderstood, or scandalized, researchers are increasingly required to navigate how they communicate their knowledge to journalists. Based on interviews with 28 Danish researchers across seven research fields (health, gender, religion, nature/environment, communication, agroecology, political science), the paper examines how researchers interact with journalists to simultaneously 'connect' to the public and 'disconnect' (Light, 2014) from the threat of digital rumors.

The paper's analysis argues that researchers use three journalistic engagement strategies of dis/connection to do so: 1) connecting to/disconnecting from specific media formats- and situations (e.g., by opting out of specific media debates), 2) connecting to/disconnecting from certain words or formulations (e.g., by framing an expert statement that consider

both sides of a political debate), 3) connecting to/disconnecting from certain journalists or public media (e.g., by making in-depth collaborations with selected journalists and avoiding others). In that way, the paper unfolds how researchers' interactions with journalists constitute a form of 'affective (media) labor' (Hochschild, 1983; Hardt, 1999). More specifically, researchers increasingly feel that they must constantly try to disconnect from affective consequences of misrepresented, uncontrollable rumors in journalistic media as an embedded part of their everyday work and attempts to contribute to public debates.

The paper further argues that, as part of their affective and dis/connective work, researchers rarely choose to fully withdraw or 'break' connections with journalistic media completely. Instead, researchers' disconnection from potentially harmful experiences often involves both breaking some ties and strengthening or redirecting others, with the overarching aim of maintaining their expert role. Indeed, researchers seem to strive to find new ways to connect with journalistic media to foster nuance, responsiveness and constructive dialogue through these encounters.

JOS06 Russo-Ukrainian War and Journalism

PP 0137 Citing the Kremlin: How mainstream Romanian media label Russian state media sources in their coverage of the 2022 Russian war against Ukraine

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Scholarship on Russian disinformation has extensively documented how Kremlin-affiliated outlets produce and disseminate propaganda (Szostek, 2015; Deverell, Wagnsson and Olsson, 2021; Beseler and Toepfl, 2024). Yet this focus on propaganda production leaves a critical question underexplored: how do mainstream news organisations in frontline states engage with Russian state media as sources? This study shifts attention from obvious Kremlin-tied outlets to high-reach, professionally-oriented newsrooms, examining whether and how Romanian journalists critically label Russian state sources when citing them.

The study draws on fourteen Romanian outlets selected primarily through audience-based ranking. The core sample comprises the most-read online news platforms in Romania according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2024), supplemented through purposive sampling to include a pro-Kremlin fringe outlet and an independent investigative platform. Of these, twelve outlets contained sufficient citations of Russian state sources for systematic analysis. Drawing on a corpus of 51,883 articles published between November 2021 and December 2024, I extracted 5,596 instances where outlets cited four Kremlin-affiliated sources: TASS, RIA Novosti, RT, and Sputnik. Building on framing scholarship (Entman, 1989; De Vreese and Lecheler, 2012) and approaches to journalistic stance (Hunston and Thompson, 2000; Biber, 2006), I employed LLM-assisted qualitative coding- validated against manual coding (Cohen's $\kappa = 0.76$)- to classify each citation as either critically contextualised (e.g., "Russian state agency TASS") or neutrally attributed (e.g., "according to TASS").

Findings reveal that approximately two-thirds of citations across the corpus employed neutral attribution, with critical labelling varying substantially across outlets: from 22% to 49%. Notably, journalists distinguished between source types: EU-banned outlets RT and Sputnik received critical labelling in 69% and 54% of cases respectively, whereas wire agencies TASS and RIA Novosti - despite equivalent Kremlin affiliation - were labelled critically in only 34% and 38% of instances. This suggests that mainstream Romanian media treat Russian wire services as legitimate news sources rather than state propaganda instruments.

These findings extend disinformation scholarship beyond propaganda outlets to mainstream journalistic practice, demonstrating that the circulation of Russian state media content operates not only through fringe channels but through the sourcing routines of high-reach newsrooms.

JOS06 Russo-Ukrainian War and Journalism

PP 0138 Journalistic autonomy renegotiated: A Bourdieusian exploration of wartime journalism in Ukraine

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Journalistic autonomy is widely characterised as a core professional principle, yet its enactment remains inherently precarious and contingent upon relations with external social forces. Existing research has primarily examined technological, market and audience pressures, source dependence and political interests as key constraints on journalistic autonomy. These analytical emphases largely reflect the dominant conditions of Western liberal-democratic media systems, where research is predominantly conducted and where formal media freedoms tend to be comparatively robust. Considerably less attention has been paid to how autonomy is renegotiated and performed within heteronomous journalistic fields exposed to extreme socio-political pressures, such as war. To address this gap, the paper examines how autonomy is enacted in the wartime journalistic field of Ukraine, a context characterised by intensified political, military, economic and technological influences. In doing so, it proposes a conceptual framework for analysing journalistic autonomy that moves beyond binary distinctions between autonomy and control, professionalism and non-professionalism, or journalism and non-journalism.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, the study conceptualises journalism as a heteronomous field in which autonomy is not simply preserved or eroded, but continuously renegotiated between dominant actors and their challengers. The Ukrainian wartime media environment offers a valuable case of traditional journalistic actors coexisting with increasingly prominent platform-based media actors, including Telegram channels, YouTube analysts and war-related content creators. These emergent actors often operate outside established professional institutions and normative frameworks, raising questions about how journalistic boundaries are redrawn and how claims to autonomy are articulated under wartime conditions.

Methodologically, the study employs a two-step mixed-methods design. First, correspondence analysis is applied to a broad range of wartime news producers, including legacy media and platform-based analysts and commentators. The resulting field map identifies actors' relational positions based on organisational, economic and professional indicators, such as ownership structures, revenue models, audience reach and platform followership, professional background and source orientation. This exploratory bird's eye view of the main positions in the field in turn informs case selection for the second step: a comparative discourse analysis of journalistic content produced during selected war-related events. Integrating concepts of boundary work, epistemic contests and critical incidents, the analysis operationalises autonomy as a relational and situational practice, examining how different actors discursively articulate journalistic autonomy across field positions. Particular attention is paid to discursive performances of objectivity as a symbolic resource through which journalistic actors claim autonomy, revealing tensions between assertions of independence and structurally constrained positions within the field.

Forgoing a conventional analysis of wartime media representations, this paper shifts the analytical focus away from platform-driven disruption and toward autonomy renegotiation under external constraints. Furthermore, it offers a non-Western, crisis-ridden case that challenges assumptions derived from liberal-democratic media systems and advances a Bourdieusian approach that reconceptualises autonomy as an enacted, relational practice rather than a stable professional attribute. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of combining quantitative field analysis methods with in-depth discourse analysis to study professional power relations under conditions of national existential threat.

JOS06 Russo-Ukrainian War and Journalism

PP 0139 Reconciling patriotic pressures and professional ethics in war journalism: Finnish editors and journalists' reflections on the coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war

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In wartime, journalists tend to express solidarity with their national community, leave the political elite's interpretations unchallenged and avoid conveying "the enemy's" point of view (Ginosar 2015; Robinson et al., 2009). This type of "patriotic journalism" has been identified in the coverage of various conflicts around the world and is usually seen as undermining professional ideals of objectivity, neutrality and truth-seeking (Ginosar & Cohen, 2019). It thus seems that patriotic journalism constitutes a threat to professional norms and identities. This study questions those assumptions by positing that journalists defend their professional identity even in the conditions of severe patriotic pressure. This takes place through discursive strategies that successfully negotiate the twin responsibilities of defending national unity, on one hand, and upholding professional standards, on the other.

Patriotic journalism is usually analysed in contexts where the studied country is at war. There are some indications, however, that patriotic pressures may take hold of reporting even in situations where journalists' own country is not directly involved in the fighting (Springer et al., 2022). We claim that one such case is the coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war in Finland. Due to Finland's traumatic history with its eastern neighbour, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine was instantly framed as a national (and European) security threat, leading to overwhelming public support for Ukraine among Finns. In these circumstances, Finnish journalism faced a strong call of duty to align with the public sentiment and express support for Ukraine's war effort. Our study explores how Finnish journalists experienced this pressure and how their newsrooms responded to it. Building on semi-structured interviews with 23 journalists and editors working for major national news outlets, we ask how Finnish journalists made sense of their practices of partisan, pro-Ukraine reporting. How did they identify the presence of patriotic pressure in their work, and how did they reconcile partisan reporting with journalistic ethics to uphold their professional identities?

Based on a qualitative analysis of the data, to be conducted between January and April 2026, we identify various discursive strategies that journalists employ to mitigate the tension between the practices of patriotic journalism and traditional journalistic ideals. Our initial observations suggest that these include at least the following discourses: (i) serving the public (by aligning with the general sentiment); (ii) defending liberal values (as the essential precondition of journalism); (iii) separating fact and opinion (guaranteeing objective reporting of events); (iv) information war (remaining skeptical of all accounts); and (v) critical independence (reporting news that challenge official framing of events). The study contributes to research on war journalism by facilitating a greater understanding of how patriotic pressures are experienced and dealt with in newsrooms. In so doing, it adds significant nuance to the field and questions simplistic normative assumptions about the threat of patriotism to journalism ethics.

JOS06 Russo-Ukrainian War and Journalism

PP 0140 Newsroom-led membership communities in wartime Ukraine: A comparative analysis of editorial practice

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After Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukrainian news organizations have expanded newsroom-led membership communities. Although these initiatives are regularly discussed as tools for diversifying revenue and building trust, their impact on the day-to-day newsroom work remains understudied. Moreover, empirical research on media communities in the context of armed conflict is limited.

This article presents preliminary results of a comparative study of such communities in wartime Ukraine. It examines how such communities are created, structured, and managed, how they relate to everyday editorial practice. This includes the division of roles between editorial and community work, and perceived changes in content and media-audience relations.

The study is based on 30 semi-structured in-depth interviews (60–90 minutes) with editorial managers and staff responsible for community development. The strategy was designed to cover media outlets from all over Ukraine, except the occupied territories, due to access restrictions. The interviews are supplemented by a systematic analysis of publicly available materials on membership, including structures and pricing, onboarding processes, community rules and moderation practices, as well as regular communications with members.

The article is based on the analysis and comparison of media communities. To compare their structure, an original theoretical model is used, consisting of the following components: the value proposition and shared practices (Wenger, 1998), the level of formalization and interaction (Ostrom, 1990; Arnstein, 1969), the expected contribution of members (Jenkins et al., 2009), value-emotional factors of engagement, and practical and cognitive benefits for members (Katz et al., 1973; Papacharissi, 2015). In addition, the analysis codes membership program design variables, including benefit bundles and pricing tiers, communication channels and frequency, tone of voice, key performance indicators, experimentation approaches, and perceived impacts on financial sustainability, editorial work, and journalistic roles.

Preliminary results suggest that Ukrainian newsrooms build membership communities through distinct combinations of incentives, participation formats, and platform infrastructures. Segmenting supporters into multiple tiers and/or parallel community formats is common. Early evidence indicates that effectiveness (as defined by respondents in terms of retention and engagement) is associated less with price points and more with a coherent value proposition combined with affective identification and regular interaction routines. The analysis identifies three recurrent configurations: benefit-oriented, mission-oriented, and editorial participation-oriented. The article proposes (1) a typology of editorial-led membership communities in wartime Ukraine, (2) a recurring comparative toolkit linking community theory to editorial practice, and (3) empirically grounded conclusions about audience engagement and retention in conditions of prolonged crisis.

JOS06 Russo-Ukrainian War and Journalism

PP 0141 Between old stereotypes and future projections: Danish journalism and the reframing of Ukraine

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Journalism is often tasked with documenting the present, yet it also mediates between inherited narratives and emerging geopolitical realities. This paper examines how Danish journalism positions Ukraine within a changing European horizon, where inherited stereotypes encounter newly charged political meanings and require reinterpretation in practice. Following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, Denmark's media—like its political establishment—aligned strongly with Ukraine and its European partners. Yet this alignment unfolded within a longer narrative history that had depicted Ukraine through a repertoire of stereotypical images portraying it as peripheral and unstable. The article therefore explores how Danish editors and journalists negotiate the tension between these inherited images and forward-looking identifications as Ukraine is reframed from post-Soviet periphery to European partner. The analysis conceptualises this process as the intersection of implicit collective remembering and collective projecting: how journalists draw on established representational repertoires while simultaneously participating in the anticipatory work through which new geopolitical alignments and identities are imagined. Earlier depictions, shaped by West/North European cultural memory, persist as background frames that coverage must navigate when Ukraine is reimagined as a resilient democracy and potential member of a shared European "we." Journalism, in this sense, functions as a site where inherited stereotypes and mnemonic patterns are reactivated, reframed, and reoriented toward imagined futures. Empirically, the study combines qualitative interviews with Danish foreign editors and correspondents with close readings of selected news and feature coverage. The interviews illuminate how journalists perceive their role vis-à-vis political discourse and shifting notions of alliance and belonging. The textual analysis traces how these orientations manifest in narrative framing and lexical choice, showing how editorial reasoning reconciles enduring stereotypes and cultural associations with new political imperatives, and how coverage redefines Ukraine's image through selective emphasis, narrative reorientation, and symbolic upgrading. Preliminary findings indicate that this process involves both continuity and transformation: journalists rely on familiar interpretive repertoires but gradually adapt them to

accommodate Ukraine's new political and moral significance. This makes visible journalism's dual role as both a reactive and constitutive force in moments of geopolitical transformation. By situating Ukraine's repositioning within both contemporary discourse and longer-standing representational habits, the article clarifies how journalistic storytelling accommodates abrupt political change while remaining shaped by implicit collective remembering. It argues that journalism operates as a hinge between remembering and projecting, linking inherited repertoires to emergent trajectories of European identity and security. In this sense, projection in journalism is understood as a form of outward-facing identity work—a means by which Denmark rehearses its own moral and geopolitical self-understanding through the narration of the Other.

JOS07 AI in Journalism I.

PP 0142 Election disinformation in Eastern Europe: Foreign influence and AI use

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Foreign-led disinformation has emerged as a central threat to electoral integrity. Such interference can be examined by focusing on false or misleading political content that has crossed a threshold of public visibility and attracted journalistic scrutiny. Empirically, this approach relies on content analysis of fact checks—and of the claims they seek to debunk—published around elections.

Focusing on fact checks is particularly informative under conditions of low structural noise, such as low-scrutiny languages, smaller media markets, and cross-language media use. In these settings, attempts at electoral interference tend to be more visible and concentrated, and fact checkers can issue clearer verdicts than in the saturated media environments of mature democracies.

Against this backdrop, this study examines how foreign-led disinformation manifests during two recent elections in Moldova, a small Eastern European country. We focus on content characteristics, provenance, and on the extent to which AI-based tools are integrated into these operations. We apply LLM-assisted content analysis to fact checks (N = 247) published in connection with Moldova's October 2024 presidential election and constitutional referendum and the September 2025 parliamentary election. The sample includes all election-related fact checks published from six months before to one month after each election by leading Moldovan fact-checking organizations (StopFals.md, Veridica, Ziarul de Gardă). Studying Moldova is theoretically informative and responds to longstanding calls to de-Westernize communication research (Ronzani, 2025; Waisbord & Mellado, 2014).

The study is grounded in journalism research that conceptualizes fact-checking as a form of boundary work (Carlson, 2018; Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and interpretive journalism (Amazeen, 2015; Graves, 2016). From this perspective, fact checks are not merely corrective interventions but institutional practices through which journalism delineates legitimate political information, and signals threats to democracy and public discourse (Graves et al., 2016). Fact-checked content thus constitutes a meaningful indicator of salient foreign interference. We further situate fact-checking as journalism's professional response to strategic disinformation and foreign information operations (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Humprecht, 2020; Zilinsky et al., 2024), enabling analysis from a gatekeeping perspective (Freelon & Wells, 2020; Waisbord, 2018). Indeed, fact checks capture not the full universe of disinformation but that content that has crossed thresholds of visibility and perceived risk (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Each fact check was coded for foreign alignment; dominant narratives; communicative and emotional strategies; and production and diffusion infrastructures. Coding followed a pre-specified LLM-assisted procedure and was validated against human-coded benchmarks, with LLM–human agreement exceeding Krippendorff's α = .80 across all variables.

Results indicate that 90.3% of election-related disinformation reflected Russian-aligned anti-EU/anti-NATO narratives. Evidence of AI involvement was limited: 3.6% of cases showed explicit indicators of AI-generated or AI-assisted content, more frequently in the 2025 election than in 2024, primarily through templated text, recycled multimodal materials, and rapid dissemination patterns.

Our findings suggest that fact-check data provide a valuable bridge between macro-level research on information operations and micro-level effects research. They also indicate that Russian disinformation strategies are beginning to adapt to AI-enabled environments, raising new challenges.

JOS07 AI in Journalism I.

PP 0143 Associations between journalists' use of AI and their editorial autonomy and time-allocation satisfaction: Findings from a representative survey

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More and more news brands are adopting artificial intelligence (AI): by the end of 2024, 60% of UK journalists said that AI has been integrated into their main newsroom to some extent. In this context, questions about how AI affects journalists'

experience of meaningful work are important to consider. This study examines how the use of AI shapes UK journalists' experience of meaningful work. Based on a quantitative survey of 1,016 UK journalists, we use a deductive approach to test hypotheses derived from the Job Characteristics Theory (Oldham & Hackman, 1976) and more recent models of meaningful work (Bankins & Formosa, 2023). Although the literature on meaningful work includes a range of factors, such as task significance, skill variety, and belonging (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Allan et al., 2019), this study focuses on autonomy and task-related satisfaction as particularly salient under conditions of AI-driven change in journalism. In communication and journalism research, the concept of meaningful work is still relatively underused, and only a few studies explicitly address the question of how meaning is constructed and experienced in journalistic work (Olsen 2025a; Olsen, 2025b). By using this framework, we hope to provide insights into how AI transforms tasks and workflows and affects the sense of value and fulfilment that journalists derive from their work. The results show that more frequent AI use is associated with significant decreases in satisfaction with the time spent on routine, repetitive tasks, as well as on creative, complex tasks. This suggests that the use of AI does not increase job satisfaction by automating routine or time-consuming tasks and allowing journalists to focus their time on more cognitively demanding tasks. This contrasts with some previous studies, which suggest that such delegation can improve overall satisfaction by freeing up time for creative and strategic work (Law & Varanasi, 2024; Palla & Kostarella, 2025). Furthermore, we find the use of AI isn't associated with higher levels of perceived editorial autonomy. Among our respondents, perceived editorial autonomy is mainly influenced by journalists' rank. While higher-ranked journalists reported higher freedom to select stories and emphasise certain aspects of stories, lower and middle ranked journalists reported less autonomy. Autonomy is an important contributor to meaningful work. Overall, our study provides quantitative evidence that AI might not be increasing how meaningful journalists find their work. The results also confirm that other factors, such as rank, play an important role in this regard. To increase the meaningfulness of journalists' work, it is not only the integration of AI that may need to change, but also other aspects of their employment conditions, such as inequalities in job control across hierarchical levels.

JOS07 AI in Journalism I.

PP 0144 Domesticating GenAI. Practices and imaginaries among Italian journalists

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This paper examines how generative artificial intelligence has become a shifting ground for negotiated practices within contemporary journalism. GenAI is conceived as a critical moment of choice and encounter in which journalism's core professional features, social legitimacy, and future trajectories are actively reconfigured. It reconstructs the path dependencies that highlight how global AI developments and imaginaries of digital future (Hepp et al., 2023) are filtered through local professional contexts. The paper argues that GenAI's domestication represents not merely technological adoption but a continuous renegotiation of journalism's social legitimacy under conditions of deep mediatization (Couldry & Hepp, 2016; Hepp, 2020). This process is shaped not only by technological affordances, but equally by the co-construction between users and technology (Pinch & Oudshoorn, 2005). Ultimately, these dynamics remain entangled in long-standing politico-institutional configurations related to the characteristics of the Mediterranean Model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

These shifting grounds become empirically visible within national journalistic fields, where global technological discourses are appropriated and reworked through local professional cultures (Arora & Natale, 2025). Analyzing the Italian journalistic field as a paradigmatic site of struggles over journalism's future, the study examines how GenAI is embraced, negotiated, and resisted in everyday work (Pink, Berg, Lupton, & Ruckenstein, 2022) and how these processes reshape the core understanding of journalism and public communication (Lewis, Guzman, Schmidt, & Lin, 2025). Moving beyond teleological narratives, the paper offers an empirically grounded account of how media communities - including journalists, pioneer practitioners, content creators, and media managers- navigate AI adoption while defending and redefining their professional boundaries and epistemic authority (Carlson, 2023). It foregrounds the plurality of competing "algorithmic imaginaries" (Bucher, 2018) and is theoretically informed by domestication theory (Silverstone, Hirsch, & Morley, 1992).

Empirically, the study adopts a discourse-analytical approach (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) to capture the discursive struggles shaping GenAI as one of the shifting grounds within journalism. Specifically, it draws on 25 semi-structured interviews spanning generations, entry routes, organizational roles, and media-outlet types. The findings show that GenAI integration is neither uniform nor predictable. Generational divisions are evident yet operate in paradoxical ways. Rather than reproducing a simple generational divide, younger journalists- socialized within increasingly flexible labour markets- position themselves as emerging pioneers (Hepp & Loosen, 2019) vis-à-vis more traditional colleagues and tend to adopt a business-oriented pragmatism. By contrast, established practitioners, defending an elite corporatist professional model, engage in tactics of resistance. However, these generational patterns are cross-cut by deeper ideological fault lines. Techno-optimistic actors frame GenAI as a productivity tool aligned with accelerationist imaginaries, reframing the notion of an "epistemic crisis" as an "epistemic opportunity" (Perreault, Lewis, & Ely, 2025) and thereby reasserting the journalist's role as gatekeeper of information. This reassertion takes place within a reconfigured, digitally mediated gatekeeping environment (Cools, 2025). Critical actors, conversely, draw on labor-oriented assumptions to underscore how GenAI erodes epistemic authority,

reduces journalists' contractual bargaining power with editors, and accelerates precarity - framing it as an intensifier of entrenched power asymmetries within the journalistic field.

JOS07 AI in Journalism I.

PP 0145 Efficiency or quality? Segmenting Swiss journalists to understand AI-driven transformations

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State of Research and Study Objectives

The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) marks a critical moment for journalism, raising fundamental questions about how news production is organized and valued (Simon et al., 2025; Thurman et al., 2025). Across public and academic debates – and echoed in journalists' statements in interview studies – AI is commonly considered a technology that may enhance both the efficiency of journalistic workflows and the quality of news (e.g., Amigo & Porlezza, 2025; Cecil, 2024; Cools & de Vreese, 2025; Diakopoulos et al., 2024). Yet whether – and under what conditions – these two goals can be achieved at the same time remains empirically unclear, especially in light of ongoing staff cuts and growing time pressure in newsrooms across the world (Newman et al., 2025; Simon, 2024; Trappel & Tales, 2021). This study addresses these issues by examining journalists' experiences of AI-related efficiency and quality gains in news production, identifying distinct types of journalists based on these experiences, and situating them within their professional and organizational contexts.

Method and Data

Drawing on data from an online survey of Swiss journalists conducted between April and July 2025 (N = 588), the study combines a descriptive analysis with a hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method. Journalists reported their perceived gains in efficiency (producing more content, saving time, coping with time pressure) and news quality (improving article quality, spending more time on research, including diverse opinions) from AI use in news production, alongside individual- and organizational-level characteristics.

Findings and Implications

The findings show that, while AI is firmly embedded in the everyday work of most Swiss journalists, perceived efficiency and quality gains remain moderate overall.

However, the cluster analysis reveals substantial heterogeneity, identifying five clearly distinguishable types of journalists. "Dual Achievers" experience both efficiency and quality gains from AI use, whereas "Minimal-Gain Users" report very low levels of both. Three additional clusters display more selective patterns, benefiting primarily in specific areas such as increasing opinion diversity in reporting ("Diversity Enhancers"), coping better with time pressure ("Time Pressure Mitigators"), or gaining substantially more time for research ("Deep-Dive Gainers"). These types differ in terms of individual factors (e.g., age, working conditions, AI-related knowledge) and organizational conditions (e.g., newsroom size, newsroom norms, media company AI strategies).

By focusing on journalists' reported experiences in their everyday work rather than on expected or potential impacts (e.g., Cecil, 2024; Cools & de Vreese, 2025; Rinehart & Kung, 2022), this study adds empirical evidence to ongoing debates about AI in journalism. It shows that perceived efficiency and quality gains vary considerably among journalists and often do not coincide. Instead, different patterns emerge depending on journalists' professional backgrounds, working conditions, and the organizational contexts in which AI is implemented. In this sense, the results speak directly to journalism's current "shifting grounds," illustrating how journalists' backgrounds, the integration of AI into newsroom routines, and organizational structures shape whether AI is experienced as a tool for enhancing journalistic quality, increasing efficiency, or creating new tensions between these goals.

JOS07 AI in Journalism I.

PP 0146 Shifting grounds for newsroom AI: Journalistic values and governance in Swiss newsrooms after the generative turn

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As generative AI becomes embedded in everyday newsroom routines, the key question is no longer whether AI can be used, but under which editorial rules and governance arrangements it should be used. While newsroom automation was often confined to specialist teams and bespoke systems, after the advent of ChatGPT experimentation with AI became widely accessible to non-technical staff, intensifying debates about responsibility, transparency, and editorial oversight. Against this backdrop, this paper examines how journalistic values are articulated, negotiated, and operationalized in the governance of AI-enabled newsroom tools.

Grounded in Value Sensitive Design (VSD), the study focuses on the relationship between professional journalistic values (e.g., accuracy, accountability, transparency, and editorial autonomy) and the organizational arrangements through which AI tools are developed, evaluated, and overseen. This study examines how practitioners in Swiss news organizations envision journalists' roles and modes of participation in the design of AI-enabled newsroom tools, and the extent to which they believe such involvement strengthens the ethical governance of these tools.

We do so by adopting a two-wave qualitative design that captures a paradigm shift over a short period. In 2022, we conducted problem-centered, in-depth interviews with practitioners leading newsroom AI and automation initiatives, including editorial managers and technical actors involved in product and data work. In late 2024, we conducted four focus groups with journalists across Switzerland's main language regions (German, French, Italian), reflecting the broadened accessibility of generative AI and its diffusion beyond specialist innovation units. Data were analyzed via inductive thematic analysis, with VSD guiding attention to how value claims translate into requirements, constraints, and oversight routines.

Findings indicate a marked shift from tool- and efficiency-centric narratives toward governance-centric rationales. Journalists' participation is most often framed not as coding or model building, but as defining purposes and limits, stress-testing prototypes, evaluating outputs against editorial standards, and sustaining human-in-the-loop decision points. Participants also highlight trust concerns and "half-knowledge" risks around generative AI that can undermine verification, prompting calls for clearer responsibility allocations, documentation and disclosure practices, and ongoing feedback loops between editorial, product, and data teams. This study is important because it provides a longitudinal lens on a paradigm shift in newsroom AI, capturing how governance expectations evolved as generative tools moved from specialist-led innovation to newsroom-wide experimentation. This is particularly valuable in a small media market such as Switzerland, where a limited number of organizations and key actors makes it possible to examine this accelerated transition in close detail.

JOS08 Local Journalism

PP 0157 Developing participatory methodology for the reinvention of local journalism: An experiment in a Southern Brazilian city

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Ensuring quality information for cities depends not only on the existence of journalistic media but also on whether these media are focused on locally relevant events, connected to the information needs of their audiences, and have independence, transparency, and financial sustainability (Nielsen, 2015). A renewed relationship with audiences may enable local journalism to preserve its social relevance in a context of fragile audience ties, declining revenues, and competition with digital content that is less costly to produce and more prone to engagement. In Brazil, the challenge of strengthening local journalism is even greater, as the country faces social and political repercussions from the circulation of large volumes of misinformation, with 61 million people (29% of the population) in news deserts or near-deserts (Atlas da Notícia, 2023), and local media are predominantly dependent on economic or political interests.

This paper presents a methodological proposal for building local journalism models with audience participation (bottom-up), an ongoing project in Florianópolis, the capital of the state of Santa Catarina (Brazil). The methodology is based on creating communities of practice involving researchers and different audience segments and is replicable in other regions.

The study began in 2023 and has already completed two empirical phases that provided insights into the type of journalism important to audiences: a representative population survey (N = 604) and a representative survey of civil society organizations (N = 260), both covering topics of interest, consumption habits, most-used information sources, characteristics that make media and news trustworthy, willingness to pay for journalistic content, desired forms of participation, among other themes.

The methodology also includes three ongoing phases. The third is the co-creation of alternative institutional frameworks to traditional corporate models: transparent and self-sustainable, better suited to local journalism as a public service. The fourth is the laboratory development of formats and languages tailored to each audience type, validated through focus groups. The final phase is the application of innovations developed together with audiences in a journalistic media outlet to be created for this purpose.

The study aims to contribute to strengthening journalism in local contexts, connecting to other research efforts worldwide concerned with more effectively including local communities in journalism (Wenzel; Crittenden, 2021), recognizing and recovering other dimensions of proximity and locality (Císařová, 2023; Svith, 2023), and addressing the critical information needs of a population (Friedland et al., 2012; Stonbely et al., 2015). We also aim to expand the repertoire of organizational alternatives and governance models beyond commercial journalism, addressing challenges reported in recent studies on local journalism (Jerónimo, 2024; Radcliff, 2023), specifically regarding sustainability and governance (Mick; Tavares, 2017; Ferruci; Alaimo, 2020; Cagé, 2015) and the role of state and non-state public services in a transforming media ecosystem (Camargo, 2020).

JOS08 Local Journalism

PP 0158 Audience analytics makes the difference—the change of news values in Finnish regional and local media

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This paper investigates how news values in Finnish regional and local newspapers have transformed between 2013 and 2023, a decade characterised by widespread implementation of audience analytics systems. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 37 journalists across 11 newsrooms, the study contributes to debates on the datafication of journalism and the shifting normative foundations of newswork in small-market European contexts.

The findings indicate a marked reorientation toward news values centred on proximity, relevance, and exclusivity. Journalists described a substantial expansion of locally focused content, driven both by audience demand and by the need to differentiate regional titles from national digital outlets. Relevance has become strongly associated with personalised and community-specific topics, while exclusivity has emerged as a strategic asset for sustaining subscription value and ensuring competitive distinctiveness within a crowded digital ecosystem.

A major development is the rising importance of identification as a guiding news value. Interviewees consistently reported a shift toward person-centred storytelling, with emotional resonance and relatability becoming key criteria in story selection and framing. This transformation has also influenced ethical reasoning: for example, journalists increasingly view interviewees with direct economic interests as acceptable contributors when their stories enhance narrative accessibility. These developments reflect broader European trends toward human-interest framing and audience-engagement logics in local news production.

The data further show strengthened roles for conflict and sensationalism. Increased crime coverage was frequently attributed to high performance in analytics dashboards, and conflict was described as enhancing the visibility and shareability of local political coverage. Yet journalists simultaneously expressed concern that overreliance on emotionally charged content might erode the credibility of titles heavily dependent on subscription income and long-term trust.

In contrast, several traditional news values—most notably timeliness, negativity, celebrity, and shareability—appear to be losing prominence. The diminished significance of timeliness reflects the limited competitive pressure many newspapers face within their local markets, where they often serve as primary information providers. The absence of celebrity news values aligns with the Finnish media system's subscription-based revenue model. Meanwhile, the limited emphasis on shareability highlights the relatively early stage of data maturity in many regional newsrooms, where basic metrics are used but advanced KPIs remain marginal.

Overall, the study demonstrates how audience analytics are reshaping news values and editorial priorities in Finnish regional and local journalism. The findings show a broader transition toward audience-centred, emotionally resonant journalism, with significant implications for professional norms, newsroom ethics, and the democratic role of small-market local media.

JOS08 Local Journalism

PP 0159 The value of local news: The community integration hypothesis revisited

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The idea that local media help citizens "imagine themselves as part of a community" is a long-standing assumption in research and public debates on local journalism (Neilsen, 2015). Originating from early classic work conducted in the United States (e.g., Park, 1929; Janowitz, 1952), the so-called *community integration hypothesis* holds that local media serve a critical social function by strengthening community ties and bringing citizens residing in the same geographical area together. This notion has long motivated policy efforts to secure citizens' access to local media. Accordingly, the current decline of local news media – marked by shrinking audiences and revenues – is widely assumed to weaken community ties and, consequently, threaten local democracy.

But is this really the case? To summarize the current state of knowledge, this paper reviews and synthesizes extensive research on the community integration hypothesis. More specifically, we first review and discuss the theoretical foundations of the community integration hypothesis, focusing on conceptual properties and the key causal argument behind this assumption. Second, we present a systematic review of empirical studies addressing the community integration hypothesis, clarifying what we know – and don't know – about this causal relationship. Third, based on this empirical review, we propose an updated theoretical synthesis focusing on how local media contribute to community integration in today's fragmented and polarized high-choice media environments.

In sum, the review identifies three historical traditions of research on local media and community integration. The first emerged between the 1930s and 1950s. Rooted in mass society theory and increased urbanization, studies linked newspaper circulation to social cohesion and considered local media a driver of integrating individuals into local life. The second tradition (1980s and 1990s) focused on declining social capital as a point of departure and studied the integrative role of

local media. During this period, the conceptualization of community integration developed together with a more nuanced discussion about causal claims. The third and most recent tradition (2010s and 2020s) focuses on how the changing (local) media environment influences community ties, examining hyperlocal media, social networks, and digital platforms.

More importantly, despite extensive research, the review shows that convincing empirical support for the causal argument still remains limited. This is due to the fact that (1) few studies address the multidimensionality of community integration – including affective, cognitive and behavioral outcomes – and that (2) the field is heavily reliant upon cross-sectional research designs and correlational evidence, significantly preventing analyses of causal effects and longitudinal dynamics.

In light of this, the paper proposes an updated theoretical model of local media and community integration in contemporary media environments as well as a research agenda addressing limitations in previous studies.

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JOS08 Local Journalism

PP 0160 Local journalism and beyond: Mapping the diversification of local information sources in today's media ecosystem

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This paper focuses on the diversification of access to local information within contemporary media ecosystems. Traditionally, local information was primarily provided by journalistic outlets such as newspapers, radio, or television (McLeod et al., 1996; Stamm et al., 1997). Digital transformation has destabilized this model and expanded the range of sources through which citizens obtain locally relevant content (Usher, 2019; Gulyas & Hess, 2023). In today's local information environment, audiences increasingly rely on non-journalistic sources, including official municipal channels, as well as community-based outlets or neighborhood groups often accessed on social media platforms (Watson & Cavanah, 2015; Park et al., 2025). These non-journalistic sources often satisfy immediate informational needs but operate outside of professional journalistic norms.

In our contribution, we aim to examine how citizens navigate and categorize these diverse sources of local information and what type of information as well as sources build today's media repertoires. Specifically, we explore two research questions:

RQ1) Which sources of information are identified by users as local sources of information?
RQ2) In which specific usage situations do they resort to which type of source?

Empirically, we employed a mixed-methods approach conducted in Germany in 2025. This includes four guided online focus groups (n = 21) and a representative survey among N = 2,069 German citizens. The focus groups provide in-depth perspectives on how residents construct their local information repertoires across both journalistic and non-journalistic sources. To validate the types of sources relevant to local information among the larger population, we examined the use of four source types—journalistic, institutional, community-based, and interpersonal. In the representative survey, we further included a situational approach to analyze source preferences across three hypothetical scenarios: local elections, road construction, and community festivities. This allows us to assess how context, demographics, and rural-urban locations influence specific information-seeking behaviors.

Preliminary findings suggest that local information repertoires are highly hybrid and pragmatic, driven by accessibility and personal preference rather than source type. Respondents utilize a fluid mix of traditional newspapers, social media, messenger groups, personal networks or even flyers and brochures, often blurring the lines between professional journalism and community-driven content. While users frequently lack clarity regarding the institutional origins of their information, they continue to value the functional depth of journalism, often accessing paywalled professional content through "work-arounds" shared within informal digital networks. This is highlighted by the survey which shows that local news is viewed as less important than digital networks and official municipal sources in all three scenarios. While this trend holds regardless of gender and education, it is particularly pronounced true for younger participants. We may conclude that while the demand for local information remains rooted in traditional motives like social orientation and identity formation, the process of assessing local news has shifted toward "news-finds-me" patterns, where social media and interpersonal contacts act as the primary gateways to local relevance.

JOS08 Local Journalism

PP 0161 The hyperlocal moment in the UK: Failure and the limits of citizen-led media

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In the late 2000s and early 2010s, hyperlocal journalism in the UK attracted substantial attention from research and policy actors as a potential response to the perceived crisis of local public service media. Defined as "online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community" (Radcliffe 2012), hyperlocal sites were framed as citizen-led, participatory, and socially embedded alternatives to declining commercial local news. Initiatives such as Nesta's Destination Local and Talk About Local sought to "anticipate, assemble and animate" a hyperlocal media space through funding and coordination (Rodgers 2017). At its height, this moment appeared to offer a reconfiguration of local journalism around proximity, participation, and everyday community life.

This paper revisits that moment from the perspective of its aftermath. It asks to what extent the attempt to animate a hyperlocal journalism space in the UK between approximately 2008 and 2016 can be understood as failure, how it is recognised and articulated by both practitioners and intermediaries, and what this reveals about the conditions under which citizen-led media can be sustained. The analysis draws on interviews with former hyperlocal publishers and with funding and policy intermediaries, alongside analysis of closure statements on hyperlocal sites and relevant grey literature including reports by Nesta, Ofcom, and the Carnegie Trust. The paper develops two conceptual lenses. First, following Karin Wahl-Jorgensen's (2017) call to take failure seriously in the study of digital journalism, it treats hyperlocal not simply as an innovation that did not scale, but as a marginal and poorly resourced form whose struggles are analytically revealing. Second, drawing on work that frames hyperlocal journalism as a media subculture or scene, it explores how practices of participation, identity, and value were shaped by relatively homogeneous social networks, affective commitments, and shared normative assumptions.

The findings suggest that hyperlocal journalism functioned less as a stable alternative news sector and more as a temporally bounded subcultural formation. While it created meaningful spaces for local representation and participation, it was also vulnerable to economic precarity, demographic narrowness, and over-reliance on project funding and volunteer labour. Closure statements and interview accounts frame stopping not only as economic necessity, but as emotional loss and the loss of a valued social role, often articulated through normative discourses about journalism's public value. The paper argues that the hyperlocal moment in the UK should be understood as a failed but instructive attempt to reimagine local journalism as citizen-led media. Its failure does not negate its democratic ambitions, but highlights the structural and institutional limits of sustaining such projects, and the importance of attending to marginal and short-lived forms within journalism studies.

JOS09 Gender and Journalism

PP 0241 Seeing war, doing gender: Visual practice and gendered experiences of male and female photojournalists in the war in Ukraine

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Although gender has become an established perspective in the research on war reporting, its implications for photojournalistic practice and visual production in conflict coverage remain less systematically examined. This is particularly evident in debates about whether and how gendered experiences shape the visual representation of war, including the production of news photographs, themes, motifs and visual approaches. This study, therefore, examines how male and female photojournalists navigate gender in their work and how gendered experiences, shaped by working conditions, social context and self-perception, influence journalistic practice and visual production in coverage of the war in Ukraine.

Unlike other forms of conflict reporting, war photojournalism remains a male-dominated field in which professional norms and everyday practices are shaped mainly by masculine perspectives (Mitra et al., 2022). However, there is a growing number of female photojournalists in the field who are making a significant contribution to the coverage of armed conflicts. Nevertheless, stereotypes and bias persist regarding the work of female photojournalists, for example, whether their coverage of war is more empathetic and compassionate, as opposed to the "hard" angles of their male counterparts, who focus on the military and weapons. At the same time, persistent gender structural bias, resulting from editorial hierarchies and divisions of labour, is reflected in practice (Somerstein, 2021).

This study builds on a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with 12 photojournalists covering the ongoing war in Ukraine, supplemented by photo elicitation based on photographs that the photojournalists themselves select as most representative of their own work in the war zone. By combining interviews with reflexive discussions of participants' own images, this study captures both professional routines and the gendered assumptions that form the visual practice.

Preliminary results suggest tension between denial and experience of gender bias in war photojournalism. While some men and women reject the idea that war reporting is subject to gender bias, others acknowledge it and describe aspects of gender discrimination as well as stereotypical beliefs about male and female roles in war and conflict photojournalism. It also appears that female photojournalists still experience devaluation of their work, not only from editors but also while working in the field. However, some acknowledge that their gender, specifically in the context of the war in Ukraine, can be an advantage in establishing contact with locals, which is then reflected in the motifs and themes of their visual production.

The findings suggest that gendered differences in war photojournalism cannot be reduced to distinct "male" or "female" perspectives in visual representation. Instead, they emerge from the interplay of structural hierarchies, social environment and individual self-perceptions within a professional culture shaped by persistent masculine dominance.

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JOS09 Gender and Journalism

PP 0243 Covering gender on risky ground: Online harassment and journalistic decision-making in Italy

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As media and communication intersect with society's most pressing challenges, journalism finds itself on shifting ground, particularly in relation to gender, digital violence, and professional vulnerability (Posetti & Shabbir, 2022). Female journalists are disproportionately exposed to online harassment (Miller & Lewis, 2020; Davis Kempton & Connolly-Ahern, 2022; Tandoc, Sagun & Alvarez, 2023), yet the structural, cultural, and professional conditions under which such abuse emerges remain insufficiently explored. This paper examines the gendered dynamics of online harassment in journalism by focusing on the Italian context, where long-standing issues of professional precarity, weak institutional protections, and persistent gender inequalities intersect with the rapid platformization of news production (Comunello, 2015; Splendore & Iannelli, 2022). Italy thus offers a critical case for understanding how journalism navigates moments of ethical choice, encounter, and transformation in an increasingly polarized and digital public sphere.

The paper presents and discusses findings from ten in-depth interviews with Italian women engaged in news production. The sample includes professionally recognized female journalists as well as women who work for digital news media but are not formally acknowledged as journalists or do not necessarily have a journalistic background. This methodological choice reflects the fragmented nature of the journalistic field – in Italy as well as globally – characterized by high levels of freelance work and blurred boundaries between journalism, activism, and digital content creation (Sorrentino & Splendore, 2022; Negreira-Rey *et al.*, 2023). These conditions often result in uneven access to editorial support, legal protection, and organizational responses to online harassment.

Drawing on feminist journalism studies (Carter *et al.*, 1998; de Bruin & Ross, 2004) and research on digital violence (Hall *et al.*, 2023; 2024), the analysis explores whether Italian female journalists perceive a heightened likelihood of being targeted when covering sensitive issues, particularly gender-related topics and technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). It investigates how such perceptions influence editorial decisions, self-censorship practices, and the inclusion- or marginalization- of gender issues within news agendas. The findings suggest that online harassment operates not only as an individualized experience of abuse but as a structural mechanism that shapes journalistic visibility and silencing of certain issues, especially in a digital environment where topics relating to gender and feminism are frequently contested.

The paper further examines strategies of resistance and coping adopted by Italian women journalists, ranging from personal risk management and informal peer networks to public denunciation and strategic withdrawal from specific platforms or beats. It critically assesses the role of Italian news organizations in providing protection and institutional backing, highlighting significant gaps, particularly for freelancers and digitally based workers operating outside traditional newsroom structures.

By situating gendered online harassment within the Italian journalistic ecosystem, this paper argues that such dynamics have broader implications for research on public discourse surrounding TFGBV. Online harassment emerges as a key site of encounter and transformation, revealing how journalism's shifting grounds affect both the production of news and the conditions under which gender-based violence becomes visible, debatable, or silenced in contemporary public life.

JOS09 Gender and Journalism

PP 0244 Reinforcing inequalities or empowerment? Understanding gendered dimensions of AI use in journalism

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The rapid integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into journalistic work has transformed established professional routines and raised new questions about power, expertise, and equality within the field. While early research has documented how AI technologies disrupt newsroom practices and redefine journalistic labor, less attention has been paid to how these changes intersect with existing gender inequalities. For women journalists in particular, the rise of AI may represent both an opportunity for empowerment—through access to new tools and visibility in technologically mediated domains—and a potential reinforcement of structural disadvantages, if adoption and literacy remain unevenly distributed. This project investigates how AI is being used by journalists in Germany and whether patterns of adoption differ by gender. Drawing on data from a large-scale survey of German journalists (N = 1116), we ask two key questions: (1) for which professional tasks do journalists employ AI, and (2) to what extent do gender and other sociodemographic or contextual factors explain variation in AI use?

Using a comprehensive measurement approach, we identify four distinct clusters of ai use: (a) text processing, (b) audio-visual content creation, (c) investigative work, and (d) management and marketing-related applications. We then estimate a structural equation model to test which characteristics predict AI adoption across these clusters. Contrary to concerns that emerging technologies might amplify existing gender inequalities, our findings reveal no overall relationship between gender and AI use. In one notable exception, women journalists are even more likely than men to employ AI tools for marketing-related purposes. These differences are not mediated by disparities in AI-related training opportunities or self-perceived AI literacy, suggesting that women's engagement with AI may reflect strategic adaptation within specific professional niches rather than differences in skills or access.

Taken together, our findings indicate that AI's impact on journalism is not monolithic. While AI may indeed empower women in some areas, such empowerment tends to occur at the margins of the journalistic field—particularly in roles oriented toward communication management and audience engagement rather than core reporting or investigative work. The study thus highlights how the integration of AI simultaneously opens and constrains opportunities for journalists, underscoring the need to situate technological adoption within broader gendered structures of professional practice.

JOS09 Gender and Journalism

PP 0245 Unveiling how journalists' digital visibility shapes news output and hateful reactions

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As social platforms increasingly shape how news are discovered and discussed, journalists' online visibility may be associated not only with the reach of their work but also with the tone of audience feedback. Building on this premise, we examine links between journalists' social media visibility, their news output, and the prevalence of hateful comments in the digital editions of Spain's leading general-interest newspapers.

The study draws on the Hatemedia dataset, which compiles news articles and user comments published by five Spanish generalist outlets (ABC, El Mundo, El País, La Vanguardia, and 20Minutos) between January 2021 and June 2022, totaling more than five million news items and comments. Within Hatemedia, hateful comments are identified through automated algorithms followed by a manual validation stage performed by trained professionals. We extend this corpus by adding journalist-level metadata not originally included in Hatemedia: journalists' accounts on X (formerly Twitter), follower counts, gender (male, female, undefined), and the thematic section where they publish (e.g., politics, sports). To protect subjects, journalist identifiers (including X accounts) and personal data are anonymized prior to analysis and reporting. We aggregate the data at the journalist level. From Hatemedia, we derive for each journalist the total number of authored news articles, the total number of comments received across those articles, and hate exposure measured both as the number of hate-labeled comments and as the percentage of hate-labeled comments among all comments received. Social media visibility is operationalized via follower counts on X.

We address three research questions: (RQ1) whether follower-range is associated with journalists' publishing activity and with both the volume and share of hateful comments received; (RQ2) whether gender is associated with differences in follower-range; and (RQ3) whether publishing section is associated with follower-range.

Methodologically, we discretize key variables into interpretable bands. In particular, follower counts are grouped into ranges defined after inspecting the empirical follower distribution in the sample, and hate exposure is represented using hate-percentage bands alongside volume measures. We then analyze relationships using contingency tables and chi-square

tests of independence, reporting effect-size statistics (e.g., Cramer's V) to quantify association strength, and conducting outlet-stratified analyses to account for heterogeneity in commenting environments.

By connecting journalists' platform visibility with publication activity and audience hostility in comment sections, this work provides a large-scale empirical basis for characterizing how attention and exposure to hateful feedback may concentrate across journalistic profiles. The results can inform discussions on visibility-related risks in digital journalism and support the development of evidence-based measures for newsroom training and professional support.

JOS10 War and Journalism

PP 0246 Domestication of the War in Ukraine by Irish, Portuguese and Spanish media: A comparative analysis of the coverage by The Irish Times, El País and Público

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Ever since February 24th, 2022, the war in Ukraine has been one of the dominating issues of worldwide media agendas. Due to the recent inexistence, since the second half of the 20th century, of armed conflicts involving most Western countries, war has become a foreign reality for most Occidental audiences. Therefore, every single piece of war journalism ends becoming a piece of international journalism, and every piece of international journalism requires a certain degree of domestication, i.e., of framing an international event in order to create some proximity with a national audience (Alasuutari *et al.*, 2013; Huiberts & Joye, 2017). Given the near inexistence, except for Ji *et al.* (2024), of research focused on the domestication of Wars in general and of the Ukrainian conflict in particular, one is led to inquire: how has the War in Ukraine been domesticated by the media of warless countries?

To answer said question, one must take a look into the case of three European warless countries, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, through a comparative quantitative analysis of the pieces published in the websites of their main newspapers of record, *The Irish Times*, *Público* and *El País* in the first three weeks of the conflict in question (from February 24th to March 14th of 2022). The present work introduces the concepts of weak domestication methods (when the predominant framing elements belong to the country under coverage, such as appeals to emotion or to solidarity with allies or sending correspondents to the field) and strong domestication (when framing elements related to the country of the audience predominate, such as the consequences of the conflict for said country or the declaration and actions of national actors). Using descriptive statistics, one measured the adoption of different modes of weak (appeal to emotion/appeal to solidarity with allies/presence of correspondents/actions of compatriots present in Ukraine/actions of Ukrainian immigrants) and strong domestication (specialists as sources/aid-driven coverage/declarations or actions of national actors/consequences for country of the audience), also quantifying, for correlation purposes (through Chi-square and Fisher's exact tests), the representations (*positive*/*negative*/*neutral* and as *victim*/*perpetrator*/*none*) of Ukrainian and Russian actors.

The results point to a predominance of weak domestication modes, especially the *appeal to emotion* (45.6%), the *appeal to solidarity with allies* (32.1%) and the *presence of correspondents* (19.1%) in all the outlets, with a strong correlation with the *positive* representation of Ukrainians actors (as *victims*) and a *negative* representation of Russian ones (as *perpetrators*). Additionally, only slight differences between the three newspapers appeared.

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JOS10 War and Journalism

PP 0247 Seeing, telling, and positioning war: Multimodal framing and photojournalistic roles in World Press Photo (1955–2025)

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The number of conflicts worldwide has escalated sharply. In an era of increasing global instability, war and conflict are highly mediated experiences. Most audiences lack direct exposure to warfare and instead rely on visual and textual representations to understand violence, suffering, and political struggle (Seeger & Sellnow, 2016). In this context, photojournalism plays a pivotal role in shaping how conflicts are perceived, evaluated, and emotionally processed (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2008; Sheafer et al., 2014). News frames in conflict reporting emerge from the interplay of text and image, which audiences process simultaneously to construct meaning, assign responsibility, and navigate war's moral and political dimensions (Dan,

2018; Geise & Baden, 2015; Geise & Xu, 2024). Multimodal framing therefore shapes not only visibility, but also valuation. Against this backdrop, the *World Press Photo Award* (WPP) serves as a central reference point that reflects and reinforces the dominant aesthetic, narrative, and representational standards within professional photojournalism (Godulla et al., 2021; Solaroli, 2015). By legitimizing certain visual forms, it actively contributes to the cultural and political framing of conflict, shaping public perception and the criteria of journalistic excellence.

However, comprehensive multimodal framing analyses of war and conflict remain rare (e.g., Jungblut & Zakareviciute, 2019; Powell et al., 2015). This study this provides a longitudinal examination of how war and conflict have been represented and framed in WPP coverage from 1955 to 2025, following three research questions:

RQ1: How are war and conflict worldwide represented in the WPP over time?
RQ2: How do textual and visual frames interactively construct multimodal war frames in the WPP?
RQ3: How are viewer-depicted relationships configured in war coverage of the WPP?

Methods

A quantitative longitudinal content analysis was conducted on **494** war-related items awarded or nominated in the WPP contests between 1955 and 2025. Each unit of analysis comprised both textual descriptions and photographic representations. The codebook included formal variables (e.g. conflict type, geographical location, photographers, media organizations). Deductive textual and visual frames were coded, including violence of war, military conflict, human interest, anti-war protest, and political negotiation. Viewer-depicted relationships and photojournalistic roles were identified through direct, averted, and closed eye-gaze types. Intercoder reliability tests indicated high agreement.

Results

The analysis reveals a stark geographical bias in conflict coverage, with Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Central America overwhelmingly represented—underscoring persistent global inequalities in media visibility. While textual frames predominantly framed conflicts through narratives of blame and victimhood, visual frames emphasized human suffering and the immediacy of violence. Crucially, multimodal framing shows that text and image do not simply align but dynamically co-construct meaning: they simultaneously assign responsibility and personalize trauma, shaping moral and emotional responses. The dominant photojournalistic roles—objective storyteller and mediated dialogist—reflect an enduring institutional commitment to professional objectivity, even as visual storytelling increasingly mediates empathy and political engagement.

Future research should combine longitudinal content analysis with qualitative and reception studies to examine how multimodal frame configurations shape audience interpretation, emotional engagement, and moral judgment—especially in contexts of unequal visual economies of suffering.

JOS10 War and Journalism

PP 0248 The victim and the oppressor – Affective storytelling in news coverage of the Gaza war

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In this PhD research, I focus on affective storytelling in news coverage of the Gaza war. Emotions have always occupied a significant role in crisis reporting, even if their role as a part of journalism has been challenged. Reporting on issues, such as the conflict between Israel and Palestine, requires a journalist to balance between the roles of a distant observer and an involved actor, to both control one's emotions and use emotions in order to tell impactful stories. It is through affective storytelling, or *"storytelling with a moral purpose"*, that journalism is able to engage its audience and make them both understand and care about the topics of news (Wahl-Jorgensen 2013). In this research, affective storytelling references the sort of narrating used in news articles that includes affective features, grounding the topic on a personalized story and emotional experience in dramatizing an issue.

I understand affective storytelling in relation to affective epistemology, the idea that emotions work as a means of knowing. A war correspondent Martin Bell (1998) proposed that emotions could have value in the context of war reporting, as journalism shouldn't "stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor". Affective storytelling, therefore, is seen here as a way for journalism to construct the roles of victims and oppressors – and thus, not only cover the issue but also guide audience to understand it a certain way. This relates to what Kotišová and van der Velden (2025) called a moral judgment of a story; an understanding of who's right from a journalist's perspective.

To understand how affective storytelling constructs moral judgment in crisis, I will be analyzing affective storytelling in news coverage of the Gaza war. In this research, affective storytelling is analyzed in news articles published in Finnish news media, using critical discourse analysis. Approximately 50 to 60 news articles are collected from two nationwide news media, Helsingin Sanomat and Yle Uutiset, and from two different timeframes, one from the beginning of the current war in Gaza (7th of October 2023 to 7th of February 2024), and the other one from the months prior to all participants agreeing to the first phase of the peace plan (9th of June 2025 to 9th of October 2025). The research questions are:

RQ1: Whose emotions are expressed in news coverage of the Gaza war?

RQ2: How is victimhood affectively constructed in news articles of the Gaza war?
RQ3: How has moral judgment, by naming of victims, changed when comparing the two timeframes of data collection?

This PhD research article is a work in progress. Currently, I'm in the process of collecting data.

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JOS10 War and Journalism

PP 0249 Between journalism and "reasons of state": German media coverage of Israels war on Gaza and its occupation of the West Bank, 2023–2025

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Since Israel began its war on the Gaza Strip in response to the Hamas attacks on October 7, 2023, many Western media outlets have faced continuous scrutiny for allegedly biased and one-sided coverage of the events. German news outlets, in particular, have been criticized for failing to adhere to journalistic standards and instead submitting to the German "Staatsräson" ("reason of state"), a state policy that considers Israel's security a fundamental German interest and responsibility after the Holocaust (Marwecki, 2020). Allegations against the German news media include, for example, the uncritical adoption of information and wording provided by the Israeli army, the dehumanization of Palestinians, the underrepresentation of Palestinian voices, and the interpretation of criticism of Israeli politics and warfare as antisemitism.

While initial analyses have shown that such criticism is justified (Goldmann, 2025), extensive content analyses are still lacking. To address this research gap, this study examines the main criticisms of the German media coverage on Israel's war on Gaza and its occupation of the West Bank in the aftermath of October 7, 2023. To this end, we analyze the reporting of nine leading news outlets in Germany, including daily newspapers (Bild, FAZ, SZ, taz, Welt), weekly newspapers and magazines (Spiegel, Zeit), and public broadcasting stations (ARD Tagesschau, Deutschlandfunk). Using artificial week sampling. the study covers the period from October 2023 to December 2025.

Following the three types of media bias, distinguished by D'Alessio & Allen (2000), we translated the criticism of the German media coverage into three hypotheses assuming (H1) an imbalance in cited sources ("visibility bias"), (H2) prioritization of the Israeli state perspective ("agenda bias"), and (H3) double standards when reporting on Palestinian and Israeli casualties ("tonality bias"). Additionally, we hypothesized the counterposition to this criticism, according to which (H4) German media reporting was biased in favor of Israel, if at all, only in the first few months after October 7, 2023, and was balanced or even biased against Israel later.

To test these hypotheses, we drew on existing codebooks from previous content analyses to operationalize the relevant constructs. Regarding H1, we coded up to three quoted sources for each analyzed media piece (Maurer et al., 2024). To test H2, we coded the occurrence of up to five deductive frames, each referring to a certain (partisan) perspective on the events in Gaza and the West Bank (e.g., terror/self-defense, antisemitism/Holocaust, expulsion/Nakba/colonialism/resistance, international law/human rights; see Turner, 2025). Finally, H3 was tested by coding the framing of Palestinian and Israeli casualties (e.g., human interest, victimization, justification, condemnation, credibility; see Grimm et al., 2025). After conducting mandatory coding trainings in December 2025, we began coding in early January 2026 and expect to conclude by the end of March 2026.

JOS11 AI and Audiences II.

PP 0250 Who gets to decide, and when? Human-in-the-loop boundary work in AI-age fact-checking

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As newsrooms worldwide integrate artificial intelligence (AI) into journalistic work, "human in the loop" has become a normative reassurance that professional judgment remains in control (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2025). Yet we still know surprisingly little about how this promise is enacted in daily practice: What does that human in the loop actually do? Existing research rarely follows how fact-checkers operationalize oversight across workflows, how they draw boundaries between journalistic judgment and algorithmic processing, and how those boundaries shift as AI tools evolve. This study addresses that gap through two contrasting cases of AI adoption in fact-checking organizations, Factchequeado and Maldita.

Comparing a public-facing chatbot and an internal narrative-detection system, we examine who is authorized to intervene in AI workflows, when intervention is triggered, and which decisions fact-checkers treat as non-negotiably human.

Theoretically, the study builds on boundary-work theory, which conceptualizes professional authority as something actively negotiated through discursive practices rather than inherently given (Gieryn, 1983; Carlson, 2016). It also draws on scholarship on epistemic cultures, which emphasizes that what counts as valid knowledge depends on tacit routines, interpretive norms, and shared judgments that resist formalization (Knorr Cetina,1999; Ekstrom et al., 2022). Together, these frameworks allow the paper to conceptualize human-in-the-loop practices as ongoing efforts to demarcate what AI is permitted to do, what only humans may decide, and who is accountable when hybrid systems produce public knowledge. Empirically, we draw on interviews and internal documentation to examine how these boundaries are constructed across data selection, output interpretation, and user-facing communication in two AI systems in active use.

Preliminary results show that in ChatMigrante, boundary work concentrates at the limits of the system's epistemic scope. Fact-checkers deliberately restrict the model to a manually curated database of official sources and refuse open-ended retrieval, positioning human judgment as essential for determining what information counts as authoritative, current, and safe to circulate. Human intervention is reintroduced when the system fails or expresses uncertainty, while disclaimers, source attribution, and refusals to answer certain questions communicate the limits of algorithmic knowledge and responsibility.

In contrast, Maldita's Narratives Dashboard embeds human authority at the interpretive core of the workflow. Although the AI continuously proposes clusters of misinformation claims, editors decide whether these clusters constitute meaningful narratives, how they should be labeled, and whether they should be used at all. This work relies on contextual sensitivity and narrative judgment that cannot be reduced to formal rules. When human validation is absent, the system quickly produces unusable output, revealing the extent to which automation depends on embodied expertise.

Fact-checking organizations offer a particularly revealing site for examining human-AI boundaries because their work centers on explicit truth claims, the reputational costs of error are high, and they have long experimented with automation (Graves, 2013). In this setting, boundary work is not merely symbolic but operational and consequential. Our preliminary findings show that human-in-the-loop is best understood as a boundary-setting practice that specifies where oversight sits in the pipeline, when it is triggered, and how responsibility is allocated in hybrid human-AI knowledge production.

JOS11 AI and Audiences II.

PP 0251 AI and journalistic authority: Audience views on responsible AI use in news

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As newsrooms continue integrating AI into news production and distribution, a growing body of work has begun to explore how audiences think about and respond to these uses. In this study, we qualitatively examine what audiences view as legitimate uses of AI in journalistic practice. Building on Carlson (2017), we approach AI as a technological disruption that reshapes journalistic authority. Like other technologies preceding it, AI invites a (re)negotiation of journalistic authority because of its transformational impact on how news is produced, presented, and distributed. Significantly, this technology may blur certainty around who is responsible for news outputs and what they are based on. In light of this, we ask: What do audiences understand as responsible AI use in journalism? To answer this question, we conducted a qualitative study with 45 participants from Mexico, the US, and the UK in early 2024. Based on two rounds of interviews and a series of elicitation tasks completed over the course of a week, we identify four key conditions raised by audiences for the use of AI in journalism. (1) First, they highlight that accountability must remain human and institutional, with rigorous oversight of news outputs (i.e. answerability). (2) Second, they require clarity around the provenance of news, whereby AI-generated content remains anchored in visible and verifiable sources (i.e. traceability). (3) Third, they emphasize the importance of specific, task-level disclosures of what AI has done, especially when it comes to uses they are least comfortable with, such as content generation (i.e. legibility). (4) Fourth, some ask for a degree of control over the amount and types of AI-generated content they are offered, including the ability to opt out of applications they are uncomfortable with (i.e. choice). These conditions assert boundaries around legitimate AI uses in journalism that concern both the epistemological basis of news production, as well as the relationship between audiences and journalism. They suggest that in online media environments with already weakened journalistic authority and high levels of skepticism, for audiences, responsible AI use is not only about enforcing particular journalistic practices and procedures, but also about supporting their ability to evaluate and scrutinize journalistic work and exercise agency over their news use—including the choice not to use it at all.

JOS11 AI and Audiences II.

PP 0252 Do human journalists prevail? Futures of editorial AI in Nieman Lab predictions 2023–2025

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In recent years, no other theme or technology has dominated the discourse on the futures of journalism quite like generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI). While managerial narratives promise enhanced newsroom efficiency and a new era of augmented journalistic creativity, critics fear that the news ecosystem will be overrun by low-quality 'AI slop' (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). In this volatile environment of alternative futures, the journalistic field is engaging in intense future-oriented sense-making that draws on collectively constructed, yet contested, expectations about the profession's potential trajectories (Brennen et al., 2020).

Among the most influential sites of this anticipatory discourse is the annual Nieman Lab Journalism Predictions series. At the end of each year, Nieman Lab gathers predictions on the year ahead from over 200 journalists, journalism experts, media practitioners, and media scholars (Perreault & Nelson, 2025). These reflections function as a key arena in which both short-term forecasts and long-term journalism futures are imagined, debated, and normalised. As a forum for digital journalism's vanguard, the predictions produce authoritative "futures knowledge"—shared, reasoned, and normative conceptions of the future that guide strategic decision-making and resource allocation in the present (Pouru et al., 2019). Such futures knowledge delineates what kinds of futures are seen as plausible, desirable, or inevitable, while marginalising alternative trajectories (Van Lente, 2012).

This paper examines how the futures of editorial (Gen) AI are discursively constructed in Nieman Lab predictions from 2023 to 2025—a period spanning initial hype, early newsroom experimentation, and the subsequent phase of normalisation and critical reassessment. Using inductive thematic categorisation, the analysis identifies recurring perceptions and collectively shared expectations about the field's development (Konrad, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The resulting thematic categories are then subjected to critical discourse analysis to examine the interests, imaginaries and power relations underlying and shaping Gen AI expectations (Fairclough, 2003). Particular attention is paid to how contributors position AI in relation to core journalistic values such as editorial autonomy and public service (Deuze, 2005).

The analysis answers the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What collective expectations regarding Gen AI emerge within Nieman Lab predictions, and how do these expectations evolve over the study period?
RQ2. What sociotechnical imaginaries and normative considerations shape these predictions, giving them broader meaning and legitimacy?

While the application and potentials of newsroom Gen AI are a prominent topic in journalism studies, research that explicitly addresses representations and expectations of AI futures remain scarce (Perreault & Nelson, 2025). This study addresses this gap by critically analysing the production of expert futures knowledge regarding editorial AI. In doing so, it illuminates the collective expectations and imaginaries of what journalism could—and should—become in an AI-infused media landscape.

JOS11 AI and Audiences II.

PP 0253 United they stand in face of AI, divided they are in projecting audience demand: How experts evaluate the future of news consumption

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Journalism and media use research are inherently future-oriented fields, if only because technological innovations shape debates about possible implications for future audience demand for journalism (Ruotsalainen, 2018). Since journalism is a field shaped by high uncertainty and confronted with a "troubled 'now', the ability to demonstrate a viable 'later' is especially important" (Lowrey & Shan, 2018, p. 133). Despite this future orientation, there is little academic research that explicitly and systematically addresses the future of news consumption (e.g., Newman, 2024), and there is even less research which goes beyond short-term predictions (e.g., Feher et al., 2024).

This study is based on a qualitative content analysis of expert interviews. In our presentation, we focus on future scenarios in the field of news consumption envisioned by experts in media and journalism, as gathered through 15 guided interviews. These scenarios can be considered social constructs based on current expectations and are therefore "more or less predictable spaces of possibility and their potential for development" (Hepp et al., 2025).

In selecting the experts, we took into account both practical and academic perspectives and were interested primarily in democratic-corporatist systems from German-speaking countries, i.e. Germany (5) and Switzerland (2), and the Nordic countries, i.e., Sweden (2), Norway (1), Denmark (1), and Finland (1), comparing them with more market-oriented media systems such as the US (2 experts) and the UK (1) . Categories for the interviews were formed deductively based on long-term studies on media use (e.g., Espeland, 2024; Newman et al., 2025) (e.g., news avoidance). In the analysis, they were supplemented inductively based on thematic linkages and new aspects raised by the experts (e.g., community building, media literacy) (e.g., Guest et al., 2012). Overall, we gave the experts room for reflection and specifically asked them about a longer time horizon of roughly ten years. .

The analysis of the interviews showed that experts hardly introduced any new topics but relied on established issues such as media trust. Despite the interview focus on long-lasting consequences rather than a possible overemphasis on novelty and change, experts expressed a strong "path dependence" (Lowrey & Shan, 2018) and present orientation (Hepp et al., 2025) shaped by external factors such as recent technological upheavals and the current market power of large tech companies. Still, strong disagreement was found regarding future audience demand, with expectations ranging from stable needs and substantial demand to a growing divide between a shrinking group of well-informed users and a group of non- or occasional news users. In contrast to that, experts largely agreed regarding the transformative impact of AI on news – a topic which experts mainly link to the issue of media trust (e.g. regarding the significance of high-trust media brands in an environment increasingly shaped by synthetic content). Based on these three highlighted topics (media trust, AI, audience demand), thematic links and their consensual or diverging projections, our presentation will outline the envisioned scenarios for the future of news consumption.

JOS11 AI and Audiences II.

PP 0254 Fixing a broken connection: Re-imagining the relationship between journalism and dissatisfied news audiences using conversational AI

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Over the past two decades, audience studies have revealed growing dissatisfaction with news among diverse audiences. Interest and trust in news are at an all-time low worldwide, even in traditionally high-trust societies. Research demonstrates that news dissatisfaction entails more than distrust or disinterest in the news, but is driven by lack of recognition, feeling overwhelmed, or perceived complexity of the news. This growing dissatisfaction has serious consequences for journalism's societal and economic relevance. In response, news organisations increasingly seek to strengthen their relationships with diverse news audiences and experiment with technologies, such as conversational AI applications, to better understand audience needs and experiences.

Existing research largely examines dissatisfaction among audiences and journalists separately. While some studies suggest that both groups share similar expectations of journalism, it remains unclear where and why these expectations fail to align in practice. This project addresses this gap by (1) examining news dissatisfaction as a shared experience between journalists and audiences, (2) identifying ways news organisations can engage dissatisfied news users, and (3) exploring how conversational AI can support more reciprocal relationships between journalists and news users.

We used a 'research by design' methodological approach, favouring creativity, connection and co-creation between participants and allowing for inductive understanding of the shared experience of journalists and audiences. Between November 2024-June 2025, we organised six full-day sessions with 24 journalists from local, regional, and national public broadcasters in the Netherlands and 23 audience members who are dissatisfied with news.

During each session, participants engaged in creative activities – such as letter writing, games and brainstorming – designed to stimulate in-depth conversations between journalists and audience members about news discontentment, after which the group co-created potential solutions for this discontentment. The sessions were facilitated by one researcher, while three other researchers played an active role by systematically documenting outcomes through notes, photos, and audio recordings and reflecting individually and collectively after each session. Together, researchers, journalists and AI-developers used the data gathered during these sessions was used to develop concepts for AI applications.

The results indicate that dissatisfaction among both audiences and journalists stems from a shared sense of powerlessness in the face of information overload. Audiences struggle to see their own realities reflected in news coverage that tends to privilege extreme or simplistic views over more nuanced perspectives. Meanwhile, the speed of news production leaves little room for journalists to engage in in-depth reporting, and the tone of online interactions makes it hard to build meaningful relationships with the public.

Looking forward, both journalists and audience members advocate to make journalism more approachable by making the news in such a way that it contributes to a society in which people feel heard and taken seriously. By adopting various roles, conversational AI can support news organisations in making the news more accessible, include more diverse perspectives, build reciprocal relationships with communities and mitigate the emotional load of news.

JOS12 Climate and Journalism

PP 0270 Shifting journalistic frameworks in climate coverage: Norms, values and responsibility in Portuguese newspapers (1973–2023)

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Climate change and environmental breakdown represent a defining moment of "shifting grounds" for journalism, confronting the profession with ethical dilemmas that challenge long-standing normative frameworks based on neutrality, detachment, and balance. Within this context, climate journalism emerges as a critical site where journalistic norms, values, and professional roles are being renegotiated in response to increasing societal expectations for relevance, responsibility, and public service. This paper examines how Portuguese newspapers have navigated these shifting grounds over the past five decades, focusing on the evolution of journalistic frameworks in environmental and climate-related coverage.

The study is based on a longitudinal content analysis of environmental news published between 1973 and 2023 in three national newspapers representing distinct journalistic cultures: the popular daily *Correio da Manhã*, the reference weekly *Expresso*, and the reference daily *Público*. An original analytical grid is employed to capture both structural and normative dimensions of news texts, including journalistic genres, authorship and sourcing patterns, headline and lead strategies, dominant news frames, and the representation of responsibility, efficacy, and collective action. The analysis further identifies the dominant journalistic role enacted in climate coverage, distinguishing between neutral dissemination, interpretative mediation, and more engaged or advocacy-oriented approaches.

The findings point to a gradual yet fragmented transformation of journalistic frameworks. While early coverage is largely characterised by event-driven reporting and risk or techno-scientific frames, later decades show increased interpretative depth, greater visibility of institutional and political responsibility, and a broader ethical framing of environmental issues. Nonetheless, the persistence of neutral dissemination as the dominant professional stance reveals the resilience of traditional journalistic norms, even in the face of a growing climate emergency. Explicitly engaged journalism remains limited and uneven, suggesting that normative change occurs more through subtle reconfigurations of framing and role performance than through a clear break with professional orthodoxy.

By situating climate journalism within a long-term perspective, this paper contributes to debates on changing journalistic frameworks in times of democratic, ecological, and epistemic crisis. It argues that climate coverage illustrates journalism's struggle to balance professional resilience with normative adaptation, highlighting the tensions between inherited values and emerging demands for ethical responsibility and collective futures. In doing so, the study demonstrates how journalism research can inform ongoing reflections on professional standards, ethical guidelines, and the future role of journalism in addressing global crises.

JOS12 Climate and Journalism

PP 0271 Who's up for constructive climate journalism? Audience preferences, habits, and exposure to a real-world campaign

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Despite widespread public concern about the climate crisis (Ogunbode et al., 2022), news outlets struggle to sustain audience attention on the topic (EBU, 2023; Newman et al., 2023). One explanation lies in the dominance of negative events and a lack of progress, which can evoke negative emotions and leave audiences feeling worn out and disempowered (Ejaz, 2022). Such coverage may weaken connections between climate journalism and everyday lifestyle or resource decisions, reduce motivation to follow environmental news, and ultimately contribute to selective avoidance (Newman et al., 2023; Smith, 2005).

In response, journalists and scholars have increasingly advocated for a constructive approach to climate journalism that emphasizes solutions and agency (EBU, 2023).

Although constructive climate journalism has been shown to positively affect attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Baden et al., 2019; Li, 2021), these effects assume that audiences actually encounter and engage with such coverage. Yet, little is known about audience preferences for constructive over negative news, and whether these translate into real-world exposure when such content is freely available.

We address these gaps by examining the preferences for constructive climate journalism, and whether interested people engage with it when it is available.

The study is based on a two-wave panel survey conducted in the Danish region of Funen, where two dominant regional news outlets—*Fyens Stiftstidende* and the public service broadcaster *TV 2 Fyn*—collaborated on a two-week constructive climate journalism campaign. The campaign focused on sustainable transportation and climate-friendly mobility solutions, such as commuting by bicycle or public transport. News was distributed across television broadcasts, news websites and apps,

and social media. Using a representative sample of the adults in Funen, we measured participants' preferences prior to the campaign and their exposure to and evaluation of the campaign afterward. Data collection for Wave 3, covering a second constructive campaign on sustainable consumption, is completed, and will be included at the time of the conference.

Results from the two waves show that a stronger perception of negativity in climate coverage is predicted by higher education, higher selective avoidance of climate crisis news, stronger beliefs that the media exaggerates the climate crisis, and lower climate worry. A preference for solutions-oriented climate coverage is also predicted by higher education, but by younger age, lower selective avoidance, lower beliefs of exaggeration, and higher climate worry.

Crucially, however, these preferences did not translate straightforwardly into exposure. Fewer than half of those who expressed a preference for solutions-oriented climate journalism followed the constructive campaign. Paradoxically, the audience group disliking both negative and solutions-oriented climate coverage was the most exposed. Campaign exposure was only predicted by older age and higher regional news use, indicating that existing news use patterns condition who encounters constructive climate journalism in practice.

These findings highlight a challenge for environmental journalism: even when constructive climate reporting is distributed through dominant news channels, it disproportionately reaches audiences with lower demand for it. By examining audience preferences and actual exposure in a real-world campaign, this study contributes to research on climate journalism and emerging journalistic practices.

JOS12 Climate and Journalism

PP 0272 Scrolling past catastrophes? Testing constructive climate journalism in a platform-based field experiment

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The dominance of problem-oriented news is a well-documented phenomenon rooted in evolutionary biology, culture, and journalistic news values (Shoemaker, 2023). Although negative news may capture audience attention in the short term (e.g., Robertson et al., 2023), prolonged exposure reduces news enjoyment and can foster news avoidance (Vandenplas et al., 2021; Vettehen et al., 2008). This is particularly problematic in climate journalism, where coverage often emphasizes catastrophic events and a lack of progress rather than potential or existing solutions (Ejaz et al., 2023; Hackett et al., 2017). Fear-inducing climate narratives are widespread, and especially prevalent in mainstream news coverage (Andersen et al., 2024). Such narratives quickly lose impact and leave audiences feeling overwhelmed and demotivated (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009). Accordingly, climate news is among the most selectively avoided topics globally (e.g., Newman et al., 2023), with stress being positively associated with climate news avoidance (Ejaz et al., 2025).

In response to problem-oriented reporting, newsrooms have increasingly experimented with constructive journalism. Constructive journalism as an umbrella term refers to practices integrating positive psychology and solution-oriented reporting while maintaining journalism's core functions (McIntyre & Gyldensted, 2017; McIntyre & Lough, 2023). Audiences seem to be interested in such approaches, with 55% of news avoiders reporting interest in positive news and 46% in solutions-oriented coverage (Newman et al., 2023). Empirical findings, however, remain limited and mixed. While short-term exposure to constructive journalism has been shown to positively affect emotional responses (e.g., Baden et al., 2019; van Antwerpen et al., 2023, 2025), evidence regarding self-efficacy and behavioral intentions is inconsistent (e.g., Baden et al., 2019; van Antwerpen et al., 2025; Schäfer et al., 2025). Importantly, existing studies predominantly rely on one-shot survey experiments and self-reported intentions rather than actual behavior (McIntyre & Lough, 2023). This is a problem, as news is increasingly encountered via online platforms (Newman et al., 2024), and we know very little about audiences' actual long-term behavior.

To address these gaps, we designed a pre-test post-test between-subjects Instagram field experiment in Denmark (N = 1,024). Participants are to be randomly assigned to follow either a constructive or a problem-oriented climate journalism Instagram account, allowing us to assess the effects of journalistic content as it is encountered in everyday platform-based news use. Over one week, participants will be exposed to posts, stories, and reels focused on overconsumption, including food waste, fast fashion, and e-waste.

Outcome measures include both self-reported attitudes and direct behavioral measures on the platform. These comprise (a) engagement- and emotion-related outcomes, such as content engagement and evaluation, and emotional responses, and (b) climate-related behaviors and behavioral intentions, including petition signing, donations, and pro-environmental intentions.

We are in the pre-registration and stimuli development phase, with data collection planned for spring 2026. This experiment enables the assessment of intensive exposure to constructive climate journalism within a natural media environment where news competes with non-news content for attention. By incorporating direct behavioral measures, the study offers insights into the potential of constructive journalism for climate reporting under contemporary platform conditions.

JOS12 Climate and Journalism

PP 0273 Reporting energy injustice: Indigenous land claims and the "green" shift in local news

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This paper investigates how local journalism mediates energy justice in the context of the "green" transition, through a case study of media coverage of the Øyfjellet wind power conflict in Norway. The conflict concerns a wind power plant licensed by Norwegian state authorities, and its impacts on the Sámi reindeer herding district Jillen Njaarke Sijte, whose traditional pasturelands and migration routes were disrupted by the project. While renewable energy expansion is commonly framed as environmentally necessary, this case highlights how the distribution of benefits and burdens of the green transition remains profoundly uneven.

The paper asks: *How did the local newspaper Helgelendingen report the Øyfjellet conflict, and in what ways did its coverage articulate—or obscure—key dimensions of energy justice?* It examines how questions of distributive, recognitional, and procedural justice were framed in local news reporting, and how Indigenous Sámi knowledge and land-based expertise were positioned relative to industrial, legal, and economic rationales for wind power development.

The study is grounded in energy justice scholarship, which conceptualises the green transition not only as a technical shift in energy systems but as a social process shaped by power, inequality, and historical injustice. This framework is combined with work on green colonialism and internal colonisation in the Nordic Sámi context, as well as theories of epistemic injustice and strategic ignorance. These perspectives enable an analysis of how journalism participates in defining whose knowledge counts as relevant and credible in debates about "just" energy futures.

Empirically, the paper draws on a qualitative close reading of approximately 200 news articles and opinion pieces published between 2011 and 2024, with a focus on the newspaper's coverage of the District Court case held in Mosjøen in May–June 2024. The analysis attends to framing, sourcing practices, language use, and journalistic reliance on information subsidies supplied by corporate and legal actors during both the planning phase and the court proceedings.

The findings show that while reporting prior to the construction of the wind power plant (2019–2022) presented the conflict as involving multiple stakeholders, the coverage of the 2024 court case was characterised by pronounced asymmetries. Journalistic dependence on the wind company's legal framing and communicative resources foregrounded economic efficiency, regulatory compliance, and climate mitigation, while marginalising Sámi claims as rights holders and knowledge bearers. Indigenous understandings of land, mobility, and cumulative encroachment were rendered vague or unintelligible, resulting in forms of testimonial and recognitional injustice. Procedural energy justice was similarly weakened, as unequal communicative capacities were normalised rather than critically interrogated.

Local journalism plays a consequential role in shaping public understandings of energy justice in the green transition. When Indigenous peoples are primarily framed as obstacles to development rather than as rights holders affected by unjust energy regimes, local media risk reproducing colonial logics under the banner of sustainability. The study contributes to energy justice and journalism scholarship by demonstrating how injustices are not only produced through energy policy and infrastructure, but also through everyday news practices that legitimise particular energy futures while silencing others.

JOS12 Climate and Journalism

PP 0274 What happens after the storm? Exploring the long-term impact of hashtag activism on social issue careers for sexual abuse (#MeToo), climate change (#FridaysForFuture) and racism (#BlackLivesMatter): A ten-year time-series analysis

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Hashtag activism, i.e. protest on social media curated by a hashtagged phrase or word (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015), has repeatedly succeeded in drawing attention to social issues. Notable examples include #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and #FridaysForFuture, which have attracted attention from traditional media worldwide. Such media attention enables hashtag activism's causes to spill-over into mainstream discourses.

However, hashtag activism has been criticised for lacking long-term impact: While it generates vast short-term media attention, this allegedly fades quickly. Studies have investigated such short-term attention peaks, conceptualized e.g., as media storms (Boydstun et al., 2014). Yet, investigations of long-term dynamics of media attention towards social issues, so-called social issue careers (Waldherr, 2014), remain scarce. The question arises whether hashtag activism-induced media attention storms can change media attention dynamics towards social issues sustainably.

This study addresses this research gap by investigating how the hashtag debates #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter and #FridaysForFuture impacted the social issue careers of sexual abuse, racism and climate change in Germany over a decade. To capture the hybrid logic of the modern media ecology, we collected n = 28,027 news articles posted by 10 German media outlets' Facebook accounts between 2014 and 2024. First, BERTopic modeling was used to structure the datasets

and identify topics within the German media discourse on the three social issues. Second, we applied interrupted time series analysis (ITSA) using generalized additive mixed models (GAMM; Beard et al., 2019) to identify whether the hashtags changed media attention dynamics towards social issues.

ITSA revealed stark differences for long-term social issue careers post hashtag debates: After an immediate surge following #MeToo, media attention to sexual abuse remained at a moderately increased level, containing further peaks. Media attention towards racism significantly waned after an explosive outburst following #BlackLivesMatter. While there was no immediate attention storm triggered by the first use of #FridaysForFuture regarding climate change, a delayed substantial change in attention dynamics was found.

The differences between the social issues highlight the importance of reactivating established hashtags: #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter were already established hashtags, in contrast to #FridaysForFuture. Movement and resonance structures for the social issue of climate change first had to be created, which is why #FridaysForFuture had no immediate impact on media attention dynamics.

Based on our findings, we cannot confirm that media attention towards a social issue generally fades away after a brief storm of attention sparked by hashtag activism. Rather, the longevity and dynamics of social issue careers depend on the specifics of social issues and previous hashtag activism, paving the way for societal resonance.

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JOS13 Migration and Journalism

PP 0353 Whose voices matter? Source distribution and structural hierarchies in Finnish news stories by immigrant-background journalists

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This study contributes to the growing field of research on news diversity (Joris et al 2020, 1895), which often emphasizes the presence of various sources in journalistic content (Heft et al 2024, 240). There is a wide consensus that journalism should include a variety of voices (Núñez-Mussa 2022, 277) and being quoted in the news media legitimizes individuals as participants in public discourse and thus as actors within societal power structures (Seuri et al 2024, 194).

Research on news sources commonly distinguishes between *elite* sources and *citizen* sources (Kleemans et al. 2017, 468). In Western contexts, journalism has traditionally privileged elite sources: mainstream media have often been characterized as echo chambers for establishment perspectives and elite voices (Maeseele & Raeijmaekers 2017).

This article examines 131 articles produced during internships for journalists with immigrant backgrounds in seven Finnish newsrooms. Between September 2023 and February 2024, thirteen journalists produced these stories. The analysis examines both the distribution of sources and the interpretative frames assigned to them. Research questions are: *What do immigrant-background journalists bring to Finnish journalism, and who gets a voice in the stories they produce?*

The study uses a mixed-methods approach. A quantitative analysis maps the distribution of personal sources, while qualitative content analysis explores the framing and roles assigned to these voices within the articles.

The analysis draws on principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which has frequently been employed to uncover how political rhetoric, news texts, and other forms of elite communication sustain dominant groups while marginalizing others (Crawford 2011, 625).

The data includes 364 personal sources. Of these, 75% (274) are framed as non-native Finnish. This marks a significant departure from mainstream journalism, where immigrants struggle to enter the news arena (Masini et al 2017, 2339) and tend to have low visibility as actors (Núñez-Mussa et al 2022). However, deeper analysis reveals that nearly 90% of non-native Finnish sources were framed as sources of lived experience, which are often defined as authentic, but lacking credibility (Vodanovic 2024, 574). I categorized these sources into four roles: *minority of a minority*, *voice of the voiceless*, *unreliable storyteller*, and *enriching element*.

In contrast, 72% of native Finnish sources were framed as experts. According to the analysis, these expert sources typically oppose, validate, or look down upon the lived experiences of non-native Finnish sources. Only twice were Finnish experts challenged within the stories, suggesting a persistent hierarchy of credibility.

Most of the stories focused on themes related to immigration or immigrants. Notably, political voices were almost entirely absent (only one politician was quoted), even though political sources typically play a central role in Finnish journalism (Seuri et al 2022). This absence is particularly striking given the highly politicized nature of immigration discourse in Finland.

These findings suggest that immigrant-background journalists contribute to diversifying Finnish journalism by amplifying voices of non-native Finns. Yet, the framing exposes structural barriers that limit non-native Finns' full participation and influence within mainstream Finnish journalism.

JOS13 Migration and Journalism

PP 0354 Marginalizing the migrants and framing the problems – Migration coverage in German online newspapers between 2015 and 2025

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The paper presents findings from a long-term quantitative content analysis of 2,117 opinion-based online articles of leading German newspapers' migration coverage between the years 2015 and 2025. From the theoretical perspective of news value, news bias, agenda-setting, and framing theory the findings shows that domestic political issues dominate the opinion journalism. The positions of German politicians as central actors are prominent in the sample, while the perspectives of migrants were marginalized. Although German online newspapers address the international dimension of migration, German politics are evaluated negatively. In addition, the issue of migration is framed negatively (e.g., using frames of incompetence or risk), while positive interpretations (e.g., frames of opportunity or integration) were used less frequently by the online newspapers in Germany in the last ten years.

1. State of the research and theoretical approach

While migration coverage remains a controversial topic, journalism studies has researched the topic comprehensively in the past. The findings show a variety of biases, e.g., the marginalization of migrant voices (Fengler & Kreutler 2020; Hestermann 2020), the dominant perspectives of politics (Haller 2017), and an overlying focus on (negative) key events (Arendt et al. 2017; Zerback et al. 2020). While international research on migration coverage focuses the first years on the European "refugee crisis" (Arlt & Wolling 2016; Berry et al. 2016; Chouliaraki & Zaborowski 2017; Conrad & Aalsteinsdóttir, 2017; Eberl et. al. 2018), the paper raises the question (RQ), how German mainstream media have reported on migration in the long term.

From the perspective of an established set of journalism studies' middle range theories like news value, news bias, agenda setting, and framing (Goedeke et al. 2016; Greck 2018; Eberl et al. 2018; d'Haenens et al. 2018; Heidenreich et al. 2019; Kelm et al. 2021; Czymara & van Klingeren 2022) the paper asks, which topics, actors, and frames shaped the reporting on migration in leading German media in the ten years between 2015 (the beginning of the so-called "refugee crisis") and 2025 (the federal elections in Germany).

2. Methodological design and empirical findings

Since previous studies have focused on overall (news) reporting (Maurer et al. 2019; 2021) and to consider the long-term research approach the quantitative content analysis (Rössler 2017) focuses opinion-based articles (e.g., commentary, editorials, essays) in leading German online newspapers that report the topic of migration. This leads to a full survey of eight leading German online newspapers and a total of 2,117 online articles (Reliability test according to Holsti: 0.82).

Findings shows that domestic politics issues dominate the reporting (48.4%), while German politicians were the main actors in 49.7% of the articles; migrants appeared as main actors in only less than one in ten articles. In addition, migration is framed negatively (e.g., using frames of incompetence or risk), while positive interpretation of migration (e.g., frames of opportunity or integration) were used less frequently by the newspapers. Using quantitative data and qualitative examples from the sample, the paper shows how leading German newspapers have shaped the migration discourse over the past ten years.

JOS13 Migration and Journalism

PP 0355 Migration Coverage with a human rights approach: How trainings transform the norms and ethics for Ecuadorian migration journalism

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In 2024, Ecuador faced a wave of violence and insecurity driven by organized crime. This, combined with limited job opportunities, motivated 94,767 Ecuadorians to emigrate, making it the year with the second-highest migration balance since 2017. Migration is a core theme in Ecuadorian journalism, but covering it is challenging due to scarce resources and knowledge. A study by the foundation Periodistas Sin Cadenas shows that 39.6% of journalists earn below the $470 monthly minimum wage and 46.7% lack social security. In this context, the results of trainings on migration coverage with a human rights

approach are critical to practice a humanized journalism that redefines the norms and ethics that shape the profession and solidify democracy.

This proposal examines the transformative effects of specialized journalism training on migration reporting through a human rights approach, based on the outcomes of the 2024 course "Migration Coverage to the United States: The Myth of the American Dream?" Organized by Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), the U.S. Embassy in Ecuador, and the Border Center for Journalists and Bloggers (BCJB), the six-week program attracted 70 participants nationwide. Of these, 40 pitched in-depth U.S.-Mexico border stories, scored on originality, feasibility, sources, and impact (84–96/100 points); 10 fellows were selected to produce warning narratives on irregular migration risks like extortion, abuse, and mental health deterioration, published in major Ecuadorian outlets including Ecuavisa (3.6M Facebook followers) and TC Televisión (3.9M Facebook followers).

The research used a mixed-methods approach: semi-structured interviews with fellows and content analysis of their work before and after the course. Interviews revealed that 80% of the fellows had little to zero knowledge of migration terms and human rights. For example, seven admitted to have said and written "illegal migration" instead of "irregular migration". They also showed profound human and professional shifts. Before the course, one fellow prioritized numbers and hard data over human stories; afterward, she created empathy-building narratives, confirmed by comparing her pre-course work to a U.S.-Mexico border story she developed.

In total, 17 journalistic pieces in three formats demonstrated how the course shaped fellows' understanding of human rights and coverage responsibility. Pre-course, they used six sources per story on average, often tragedy-focused; post-course, eight sources with accurate terminology, diverse voices, and warnings beyond drama. Notably, the training enabled the TC Televisión journalist to deliver his story on Ecuador's first recorded case of artificial intelligence used to extort a missing immigrant's family.

This research bridges local insights to global discourse by showing how targeted training transforms migration coverage in high-emigration, high-risk settings, offering a replicable model for Latin America and beyond, where violence and policy shifts—like Trump's 2025 U.S. restrictions—heighten the need for ethical reporting. Centering fellows' perceptions, it evidences training's role in fostering democracy through humanized information that deters risky migration and transforms the journalism profession towards a human rights approach. Presented at the 11th European Communication Conference, it advocates scaling similar programs internationally, enhancing journalism's societal role in rights advocacy and informed publics.

JOS13 Migration and Journalism

PP 0356 Europe as a mirror: A discourse analysis of the European migration crisis in Japanese major newspapers (2015–2025)

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Since the outbreak of the "Refugee Crisis" in 2015, migration issues in Europe have transcended regional boundaries to become a global media event. In Japan, a nation geographically distant and ethnically homogeneous, coverage of European migration is not merely a report on foreign affairs but functions as a critical lens through which domestic anxieties regarding a hyper-aging population, severe labor shortages, and the preservation of national identity are projected. This study investigates how the European migration crisis has been constructed, framed, and "domesticated" in the Japanese media landscape over the past decade.

This study analyzes a corpus of approximately 3,000 articles published between January 2015 and November 2025 in four major Japanese newspapers: *The Asahi Shimbun* and *The Mainichi Shimbun* (liberal), *The Nikkei* (financial/center-right), and *The Sankei Shimbun* (conservative). Utilizing a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative text mining with qualitative critical discourse analysis, we examine chronological trends in media attention and competing frames.

Our quantitative analysis reveals "asymmetric waves of attention" across four phases. First, coverage exploded in 2015, accounting for nearly 30% of the total dataset. Initial humanitarian sympathy rapidly shifted toward security concerns following the Cologne attacks and Paris terror attacks. Second, attention plummeted between 2017 and 2021 as the crisis normalized. During this period of silence, coverage focused narrowly on "economic integration"—specifically Germany's vocational training—as a potential model for Japan's own policy reforms. Third, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered a massive resurgence. Notably, the term "refugee" (*nanmin*), used for Middle Eastern arrivals, was replaced almost entirely by "evacuee" (*hinanmin*) for Ukrainians, correlating with a highly positive tone that highlighted an implicit racial hierarchy. Finally, recent coverage (2023–2025) has increased, focusing on the rise of right-wing populism and the "Fortress Europe" narrative.

Qualitatively, the study identifies three dominant frames correlated with ideological stances: the "Humanitarian Frame" (liberal papers) criticizing border policies as a retreat from human rights; the "Security Frame" (conservative paper)

employing metaphors of natural disasters (e.g., "influx," "waves") to validate strict border controls; and the "Economic Frame" (financial paper) adopting a utilitarian perspective that weighs labor needs against social costs.

The core argument is that Japanese media utilizes Europe as a "mirror" to negotiate Japan's own identity. Through "strategic domestication," newspapers translate European events into lessons for Japan. Furthermore, media engage in the "politics of terminology" to construct "othering." While newspapers unhesitatingly use the word "immigrant" (*imin*) for Europe, this term is taboo in domestic political discourse, where foreign workers are euphemized as "technical interns." By confining the label of "immigrant" to the European context, the media reinforces a cognitive boundary: "Immigration" is framed as a European problem of chaos, whereas Japan deals only with managed foreign labor.

This study concludes that Japanese coverage of European migration is instrumentalized to navigate the national dilemma of needing foreign labor while fearing social change.

JOS13 Migration and Journalism

PP 0357 "Through the eyes of a stranger." Contradicting journalistic epistemology in German immigrant society

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In recent years, questions about the legitimacy of journalistically produced knowledge have grown more urgent, often focusing on how positionality intersects with established forms of knowledge production. While many of these debates are centered on new technological possibilities, this contribution asks how the position of the "stranger" was strategically used by journalists who immigrated to Germany in the 1960s. For this, we foreground the work of the first two non-white female journalists in German television: Navina Sundaram and Roshan Dhunjibhoy. Both journalists began work simultaneously and remained singular as figures in television up until recent decades. However, they have been almost completely memory-holed in German research. Coming from India and Pakistan, respectively, they worked as foreign correspondents and also reported on German immigration policy, often foregrounding their personal position in reporting. For instance, in one of her first programs for German television, entitled "Through the eyes of a stranger," Dhunjibhoy states that she is wearing a Sari to show how Germans stare at "strangers" in public.

In our study, we ask how this position of the "stranger" shaped practices of contradicting within and against journalism during the emergence of immigration as a contested topic in German society. For this, we offer a theoretical framework that integrates practices of contradicting into journalistic epistemology. We expand Carlson's (2025) conceptualization of epistemic contests with a praxeological lens that foregrounds the processual and relational nature of contradicting. Practices of contradicting are dependent on the position of the journalist, and we show how this position is used to challenge existing epistemologies (Smeenk et al., 2025). Positionality here functions as a core element contesting journalistic notions of objectivity. Finally, we use postcolonial and feminist theoretical approaches to show how unequal power structures play into the revealing or obfuscation of positionality.

To illustrate this theoretical framework and add historical context to previous research about positionality and objectivity, we provide early examples of reporting by Sundaram and Dhunjibhoy. For this, we conduct a discourse analysis of the earliest four programs (1964–1967) by Sundaram and Dhunjibhoy that aired on North German (NDR) and West German Broadcasting (WDR) as well as a document analysis of archived press reporting and correspondence that accompanied this reporting. This enables us to reconstruct practices of contradicting alongside the reactions they elicited from and directed towards journalists. We show that in both analyzed cases, positionality was an integral rather than incidental element of reporting. For instance, both journalists often directly related their position to the subjects of their reporting, either to directly contradict interview partners with their experience (Dhunjibhoy) or by allowing interview partners to interrupt them and take an active role in interpreting knowledge (Sundaram). In our discussion, we reflect on the applicability of this historical context to current discussions of journalistic epistemology.

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JOS14 AI and Journalists

PP 0358 Human after all: Frame building practices among Dutch AI journalists

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Journalists are key actors in translating and making sense of complex subjects, such as the societal implications of Artificial Intelligence (AI), for a broad audience. The study at hand examines the level of autonomy journalists experience in covering

AI-related issues and, more specifically, addresses the choices they make – both consciously and unconsciously – during the reporting process.

When covering topics such as AI, journalists select and process information according to established professional norms, values, and routines, including assessments of newsworthiness and topical relevance (Löffelholz & Sarısakaloğlu, 2024; Deuze, 2005). Previous research has consistently shown that these selection processes are not neutral but involve framing practices through which journalists select and highlight certain aspects of issues, while downplaying others and often without explicitly reflecting on claims of objectivity or neutrality (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2019; Hänggli, 2011; Matthes, 2009; Scheufele, 1999; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

Framing research traditionally focuses on analysing media content and identifying dominant frames in news coverage. The relationship between news production itself and the process of frame production – where frames are negotiated, anticipated and preconfigured – are often overlooked (Guenther et al., 2023; Borah, 2011; Matthes, 2009; Scheufele, 1999; Entman, 1993). However, recent research shows that frame building plays a key role in news production processes. Brüggemann (2014) conceptualises frame building as a multi-level process shaped by interacting individual, organisational-professional and broader societal factors, such as role conceptions, beat-related expertise and issue cultures, such as elite consensus and polarisation around a topic. This conceptualisation has been applied in studies of news coverage on topics as climate change and healthcare and was the theoretical basis of semi-structured interviews and focus groups to explore journalists' perceptions of framing practices (Verleyen et al., 2025; Kirchner et al., 2024; Brüggemann & Engesser, 2014).

To date, these factors have not been systematically applied as a methodological framework for semi-structured interviews on the production of AI journalism. The study at hand applies Brüggemann's factors in semi-structured interviews with nine journalists covering AI at five national Dutch newspapers. Our preliminary findings suggest that journalistic framing practices in AI coverage are shaped by the interplay between individual factors, such as journalists' personal views on AI and organisational-professional conditions, most notably the absence of formal editorial guidelines. While some journalists demonstrate an explicit awareness of framing – occasionally adopting reflexive strategies, such as positioning themselves as the devil's advocate – most interviewees describe their framing practices as an implicit outcome of routinised work rather than the result of deliberate editorial choices. These practices are embedded in everyday newsroom conditions, including uneven levels of AI expertise within newsrooms, beat-related routines and news values that prioritise negative or risk-oriented AI developments.

In line with Brüggemann's (2014) framework, our findings show that the combination of high individual expertise and the absence of formal guidelines mean that framing choices are largely made by individual journalists rather than collectively negotiated within newsrooms. Together, these findings contribute to understanding journalists specialising in AI as an interpretive community (Zelizer, 1993).

JOS14 AI and Journalists

PP 0359 At the forefront and open, but cautious: How Danish reporters view and use pioneering AI built for newsrooms

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The 2022 launch of ChatGPT prompted questions from many news organizations about how generative AI might be useful and/or harmful to the field. Meanwhile in Denmark, one of the country's largest media companies had been developing in-house newsroom AI tools for more than three years, putting Danish news organizations at the forefront of generative AI (Adami, December 20, 2024). JP/Politikens Hus developed its own tools to avoid Big Tech and maintain control over its intellectual property (Gupta, July 12, 2024). In spring 2025, JP/Politikens Hus launched newsroom chatbot MAGNA, which can transcribe interviews, write headlines and fact boxes, learn to mirror a reporter's writing "voice," scan a press release to suggest interview questions, and write news articles (J. Skov Andersen, personal interview, April 7, 2025). Previous studies examining journalists' reception of new digital technologies in the newsroom have found that journalists express skepticism, view technologies as a threat to journalists' professional control and job security, and ignore the tools (Carlson, 2017; Lewis, 2012; Powers, 2012; Singer, 2024; Usher, 2025).

This ethnographic study explored Danish reporters' uses and opinions of generative AI during the key inflection point when MAGNA launched. It drew on semi-structured in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 31 reporters who covered different beats (sports, health, culture, government, business, etc.). The sample stratified reporters based on time in field (from digital-native interns and early-career reporters to mid-career journalists who had been in the newsroom during the rise of social media, to veteran journalists whose careers predate newspaper websites). The Hierarchy of Influences Model (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016), theories of Social Construction of Technology (Gane & Beer, 2008; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009) and new institutionalism (Sparrow, 2006) informed the interview questions.

Thematic analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017) of the data found, across beats topics and experience levels, that journalists were mostly using generative AI to do things they did not enjoy, such as transcriptions and writing headlines; or in ways that saved time, such as searching through volumes of documents for specific information they would then verify. In this

way, they viewed AI as helpful, like a research assistant. Culture reporters found the least use for AI, emphasizing the need for creativity in their work and a desire to practice and grow as writers. Investigative reporters found the most use for generative AI in searching through large reports. In terms of time in field, the newest reporters were the most strongly opposed to AI use, saying it felt like "cheating." None of the participants said they used AI to write articles. Reporters did not express concern about AI replacing their jobs because they did not trust it to be accurate or to replace critical thinking. This study showed three key differences from what previous studies have found. This work showed journalists' being open to using new technology, digital natives as the most skeptical of new technology, and a lack of concern the new technology would harm journalism.

JOS14 AI and Journalists

PP 0360 Let data speak: Data storytelling in the era of big data and AI

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The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools is beginning to change data-driven work in journalism, particularly in investigative reporting (Bradshaw 2025). With the advent of AI, new powerful tools enable the extraction of knowledge from large datasets more effectively, identifying ideas for newsworthy topics quicker, and supporting journalistic investigations (de-Lima-Santos and Ceron 2021; Thäsler-Kordonouri and Koliska 2025). At the same time, it is essential to understand how big data and AI interact with each other in these contexts, as it poses epistemological consequences in terms of creating new stories. This study offers an analysis of their impact on data-driven stories in terms of sourcing, newsgathering, processing, and subsequent presentation.

Working with data has been part of journalism for decades (Anderson, 2018) yet the adoption of AI in the newsroom and newswork is likened to "a new journalistic paradigm" (Biswal and Kulkarni 2024). In this study, we examine the main characteristics of stories created using big data and AI-based tools using a sample of 22 projects from the 2025 Sigma Awards for data journalism. Using the grounded theory methodology (GTM) (Bryant and Charmaz 2019), the study first identifies the salient characteristics of the projects, then develops them in more detail, and analyses them. The characteristics are associated with three categories – sources, newsgathering/processing and appearance, which reflect the entire process of creating a data story (Garreton et al. 2024). The findings indicate that artificial intelligence tools are transforming data stories in both the creation process, where the authors often used the tools to identify new topics, and possibly follow-up action in the field, and their visual form, yet data visualisations are not the only means to reveal findings.

The study discovered that the amount of processed data enables newsrooms to develop new participatory interfaces, where every reader can explore data themselves, bringing more engagement towards the message in the story. There is an observable trend to employ self-developed AI tools, which were the most frequently used type of tools in these projects, also enabling journalists to increase the transparency of their data gathering and analysis procedures, supporting earlier evidence (Weber et al. 2018). The performed analysis confirmed previous statements (Salaverría and de-Lima-Santos 2020; Dowd 2025), that the availability of data and unrestricted access are necessary prerequisites for new, data-driven investigations, that can cover wider ranges of topics than before.

The results clearly showed that new developments in AI are changing the way not only journalistic content is presented, but they could also serve as a suitable basis for further research on audience needs to better understand the impact and understanding of data stories (Appelgren 2018; Swart et al. 2022), potentially leading to interdisciplinary approaches about the impact of data-driven storytelling and interfaces for public discussions and political 'ramifications' of data-driven investigations (Hamm 2022).

JOS14 AI and Journalists

PP 0361 Different types of AI user profiles in German journalism: The advanced all-rounder, occasional user, and selective strategist

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AI tools in journalism are often heralded as rapidly spreading and fast-paced auxiliary applications that pervade numerous aspects of journalistic practice. A recent survey among journalists based in German-speaking Switzerland (Fürst, 2025) found that 86.7 per cent use AI tools daily.

To explore the current state of journalists' AI usage in Germany, we conducted a representative survey with *N* = 1,171 professional journalists following the definition set forth by the Worlds of Journalism Study (Hanitzsch et al., 2025). Besides collecting data on socio-demographics, professional roles, and organisational aspects, this study focused on the usage intensity (scale from *never* to *always*) of AI tools across 13 different application domains (e.g., research and topic

identification, fact-checking, translation & transcription, text production, proofreading, editorial review and revision, and format adaptation and repurposing).

Using a *Latent Profile Analysis* (LPA) we identified three distinct AI usage profile types among journalists in Germany:

The results of the LPA show three AI usage profiles: (1) The 'advanced all-rounder' profile, which comprises those journalists that scored highest on the intensity of their AI usage across most application domains. These individuals demonstrate maximum scores in the usage of AI tools in the application domains research and topic identification, fact-checking, text production, proofreading, and editorial review and revision. (2) The 'occasional user' profile, which comprises journalists that remain reluctant in their AI use. Our data suggests similar patterns to the intensive user profile group but with lower intensity—between 'never' and 'rarely'—for the usage of AI tools across all application domains. (3) The 'selective strategist' profile, which shows maximum scores in intensity for translation & transcription, while following closely the intensive user profile pattern regarding research and topic identification, fact-checking. These journalists seem to apply AI tools only for selected application domains that represent productive tasks of traditional reporters vis-à-vis more editorial tasks of the intensive user profile.

While statements of widespread usage of AI tools in journalism hold true on the surface, they forgo incremental nuance—our findings show that AI usage in newsrooms is largely driven by a smaller group of intensive users, while occasional and selective groups remain restrained. To better understand motivational patterns of German journalists and their adoption of a "wait-and-see stance" (Salvador-Mata et al., 2025), further research is necessary.

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JOS14 AI and Journalists

PP 0362 The synthetic image as an editorial dilemma: Ethics and editorial practices of AI-generated image use in Czech newsrooms

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Recent years have presented numerous challenges and dilemmas for journalism, including the increasing use of generative artificial intelligence, which is becoming an integral part of journalistic practice, whether for generating texts, analysing data, or producing visual materials. While photography in journalism has traditionally been perceived as a window onto events, it operates through symbolic schemas and institutional conventions. Generative AI systems amplify this constructed nature of news imagery. The photorealistic generated images appear credible precisely because they replicate the aesthetic cues of deeply rooted cultural stereotypes that trigger affective responses.

Especially for journalism, whose credibility is built on ethical standards of content, the use of AI-generated images poses significant challenges that raise questions not only about bias, stereotypes, or even discriminatory representations, but also point to a broader reconsideration of the role of images in journalism. It also raises questions about everyday editorial practices and the rules that regulate and legitimate journalistic work in individual newsrooms. This study examines the application of generative photorealistic imagery in journalism, specifically within the realm of illustrative photography. Therefore, it focuses on the normative, aesthetic, and epistemological implications of synthetic visual representations.

To investigate the practice of using AI-generated images in journalism within Czech newsrooms, we are employing a qualitative approach based on 12 semi-structured interviews with photo editors from both commercial and public Czech news media. Subsequently, we supplemented them with photo-elicitation based on AI-generated photorealistic illustrative images for news content. The perspectives of photo editors provide important insights into editorial practices. Some of them even produce generated images themselves. However, those who do not directly participate in image production have significant decision-making power over whether a given image will be published, and they also determine and control the editorial standards and ethical principles that generated images must adhere to.

Preliminary results highlight that the use of generative tools varies significantly across the newsrooms. While some refrain from using such technologies altogether, others express keen interest but are constrained by the current limitations of generative models, particularly in terms of visual coherence and the time-intensive process required to produce convincing photorealistic outputs. Nonetheless, there is a consensus that generative images are used primarily as illustrative material, rather than as documentary content. The primary motivation for their use lies in the desire to produce original visual assets that differ from widely circulated stock imagery and, conversely, provide content created specifically for the needs of a given newsroom.

However, the results of our study also show that the preparedness of newsrooms and their ethical rules regarding AI-generated images vary among Czech media outlets. Some have systematic guidelines in place, while others lack any internal policies. Such differences raise questions about the consistency of ethical standards across the Czech media landscape, with potential risks for the overall credibility of journalism.

JOS15 Economy and Journalism

PP 0363 Funding journalism's future. The pivotal role of innovation funds

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This paper scrutinizes the role of innovation funds – which distribute a substantial portion of the scarce financial resources for innovation within the journalistic field – as important catalysts of journalistic innovation, emphasizing its necessity for journalism's survival (Lowrey et al., 2022). These funding organizations, often including training and supervision pertaining to innovation as well, perform a pivotal role in setting journalism's innovation agenda and shaping journalism's future (Creech & Nadler, 2018). Without disregarding some recent attention for their impact, (Noster, 2025), including specific innovation funding schemes (Kammer & Blach-Orsten, 2025; Zambelli, 2025), Lowrey et al.'s (2019) call for more scholarly attention and scrutiny for these crucially understudied "ancillary organizations" remains pertinent.

Our contribution addresses this need for more research into the way intermediary organizations shape journalism's innovation agenda as well as steer the direction in which journalism is developing. Through an in-depth case study of the Dutch Journalism Fund (DJF), a pivotal, state-funded Dutch journalistic innovation intermediary, this paper critically interrogates how the DJF understands and envisions journalistic innovation and promotes specific narratives about journalism's future. Moreover, it scrutinizes how the specific understanding of journalistic innovation is translated into specific selective funding schemes, including coaching and training trajectories.

In doing so, we offer a much needed interrogation of the idea that journalistic innovation is inherently good- an idea that seems to have become almost self-evident (Bossio & Nelson, 2021; Godin, 2015). Instead, this paper starts from the idea that innovation is a socially constructed concept, often operating within rather utopian and techno-solutionist discourses about journalism's future, which is strategically exploited by different actors with diverging interests (Harbers, 2024). Despite some US-centered research criticizing the entrepreneurial values and the techno-solutionist, market-oriented perspective on innovation that these innovation intermediaries herald (Creech & Nadler, 2018; Creech & Parks, 2022), the notion of innovation and its utopian promises are rarely problematized (Harbers, 2024). Moreover, a precise inquiry into the diverse contexts in which these 'innovation intermediaries' operate, the diverse roles they perform, or the impact they have on journalism as a practice and field remains wanting.

Our case study combines a discourse analysis of internal and public documents about their funding schemes (e.g. annual reports, policy papers, funding calls and guidelines), 10–15 semi-structured interviews with employees (ranging from managers and policy advisors and coordinators to jury members selecting innovative initiatives and innovation experts coaching the innovation teams) of the DJF, with participant observation of the different journalistic actors participating in specific funding schemes. As such, it offers a rich, multifaceted analysis of the ways in which innovation intermediaries shape "which kinds of futures for journalism people can imagine and what they can reasonably expect" (Ruotsalainen et al., 2021), subsequently determining but also restricting which innovation initiatives are worth funding to bring about these futures (Willemsen et al., 2021).

JOS15 Economy and Journalism

PP 0364 From platform support to field reconfiguration: Fact-checking and the changing boundaries of journalism

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Over the past decade, fact-checking has consolidated as a professional hybrid field, whose institutionalization has been deeply shaped by economic and infrastructural dependence on digital platforms, most notably through Meta's Third-Party Fact-Checking (3PFC) program (Graves et al., 2023; Cazzamatta, 2024; Shin et al., 2025). The suspension of the program in the United States, alongside growing uncertainty about its future in Europe and the Global South, marks a critical moment to examine how fact-checking organizations are renegotiating sustainability, professional identity, and public relevance beyond platform support.

The paper is grounded in Journalism Studies and field theory, drawing on Bourdieu's theory of fields (Bourdieu, 1993; 2005) and its emphasis on tensions between autonomy and heteronomy, as well as scholarship on boundary work and professional identity (Gieryn, 1983; Carlson, 2016; Graves, 2018), and the hybridization of journalism (Deuze, 2007; Waisbord, 2013; Graves, 2016). We conceptualize fact-checking as a *hybrid and contested subfield* whose boundaries have been partially

shaped by platform-driven economic arrangements, and which is currently undergoing a process of redefinition triggered by changing market conditions.

The paper addresses two research questions: (RQ1) How are fact-checking organizations reconfiguring their business models in response to declining or uncertain platform support? (RQ2) How do these economic strategies reshape fact-checking's professional identity and journalistic boundaries?

Empirically, the study adopts a qualitative, comparative research design based on thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and combines two integrated methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). First, we conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of fifteen fact-checking organizations across three regions: the United States (where the 3PFC has ended), Europe, and South America (where it remains active but increasingly fragile). Second, we carried out ethnographic fieldwork at the 2025 Global Fact-Checking Summit, including participant observation of panels and community meetings, as well as informal interviews. Analytically, this combination allows us to link organizational perspectives with field-level processes: interviews capture initiatives' viewpoints within specific organizational and national contexts, while ethnographic fieldwork sheds light on collective sense-making and boundary formation.

Findings reveal a structural tension at the core of current transformations. On the one hand, many organizations are expanding business-to-business models, consultancy services, data and technology-based products, reframing fact-checking as a form of *verification expertise* operating upstream in information production and governance. This shift enhances economic sustainability and positions fact-checkers as specialized knowledge actors beyond journalism. On the other hand, interviewees simultaneously articulate—often explicitly—a discursive and practical "return to journalism," emphasizing investigative reporting, political accountability, explanatory formats, and journalistic autonomy, particularly as they distance themselves from platforms.

Crucially, this reconfiguration raises a visibility dilemma. While B2B and expert-oriented models may secure financial stability, they risk reducing public-facing visibility and, consequently, the capacity of fact-checking to counter disinformation in the public sphere. The paper argues that these strategies represent not only a search for new revenues but an ongoing struggle over the field's boundaries, legitimacy, and democratic role. Overall, the study contributes to Journalism Studies by showing how changing business models actively reshape professional identities, practices, and visibility regimes in hybrid journalistic fields.

JOS15 Economy and Journalism

PP 0365 Journalistic independence dies in acquisition? Ownership and editorial shift at The Washington Post after Jeff Bezos

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The growing influence of large U.S. tech companies and their founders and CEOs on the news media has given fresh impetus to inquiries into the role of media ownership (Weitz et al., 2019). Tech company founders have taken on the role of media owners, shaping a news industry beset by economic challenges (Archer & Clinton, 2018; Wagner & Collins, 2014). The entanglement of vested interests with ownership raises important questions for a free press and its ability to function as an independent public watchdog.

We investigate one such takeover: In August 2013, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos purchased the financially ailing *Washington Post* from private owners for US$250 million (Weitz et al., 2019). While Bezos' approach was initially described as being "hands off" regarding interaction between him and the paper's management, specific instances of editorial interference caused backlash, leading to resignation of senior *Post* staff and the cancellation of a large number of subscriptions.

We focus on *how* and *to what extent* the influence of Bezos' ownership is detectable within the editorial practices of the *Washington Post*. Specifically, we are interested both in *direct* effects on the paper's coverage of specific events and statements connected to Bezos and his companies, and in *indirect* long-term effects, i.e. changes that may reflect individual journalists' anticipation of its new owner's preferences. To test these assumptions, we formulate a series of preregistered hypotheses (see https://osf.io/gwse3/overview?view_only=17bd226a6d4c49438425c475ca12e45d) on changes in the volume of coverage of Bezos and his companies, shifts in the tonality regarding Bezos and his competitors and changes in generic frames related to opportunity, risk and responsibility, that reflect an increasingly neoliberal view of economics (Chan et al., 2024). We test our hypotheses through a large-scale semi-automated comparative content analysis that compares the *Post*'s coverage of technology (e.g. risks and benefits of artificial intelligence, ecological costs of cloud computing) and economics (e.g. tech regulation, market concentration, trade policy), as well as issues relating to Bezos and his competitors, relying on a corpus that covers the period from 2001 to 2025. We combine open-source LLMs (Llama, Qwen), topic modeling and manual validation to connect issues, actors and frames.

Early results suggest that an increase in coverage is indeed correlated with the takeover, though a change in sentiment is not. In a next step we will test whether individual journalists at the *Post* adjusted their editorial stance in response to the takeover, comparing junior and more senior editorial staff.

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JOS15 Economy and Journalism

PP 0366 Media capture risk map: A multidimensional framework for mapping systemic risks in the platformized age

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This contribution addresses the concept of media capture, highlighting its theoretical limitations and offering a new empirical operationalization that enables comparative analysis across countries and contexts. It presents the results of a comparative research project mapping the risk of media capture across 32 European countries, including the 27 EU Member States, Western Balkan candidate countries, and Türkiye.

Originally rooted in regulatory capture theory (Stigler, 1971), the concept was developed to describe collusion between political elites and media owners in transitional democracies (Besley & Prat, 2006; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008) and later expanded to include economic instrumentalization in consolidated democracies (Corneo, 2006; Petrova, 2008). While this literature effectively identified the subordination of newsrooms to vested interests, we argue it is insufficient for capturing the complexity of the contemporary media ecosystem.

Our critique identifies two primary limitations. First, from an epistemic perspective, the notion often implies a binary ideal of complete independence that rarely exists. Second, from an ecosystemic perspective, the platformization of society has shifted the locus of control. The focus can no longer remain solely on "media" as traditional outlets, but must extend to "information" more broadly, as algorithms and tech giants mediate visibility and the spread of disinformation.

This paper proposes a redefinition of the concept that define capture not merely as ownership control, but as a structural condition in which particularistic interests—political, commercial, or technological—override the universal normative function of the media to inform citizens. However, treating capture as a static, binary outcome—where media are either "free" or "captured"—is theoretically slippery and empirically elusive. Since media institutions operate within complex webs of interaction rather than in a vacuum, proving definitive capture is often impossible. Consequently, this study shifts the analytical lens from detecting capture to mapping the *risk* of capture. We conceptualize risk not as an event, but as the presence of environmental and structural vulnerabilities that make it more likely for particularistic interests to prevail over the public interest in an informed citizenship.

To evaluate this risk empirically, we distinguish three interdependent spheres: a) Media System, b) Political System, c) Societal Context. Within these spheres, we identify specific risk indicators — ranging from political and business influence and editorial professionalism to information disorder and the rationality of legal authorities — constructed through the aggregation of measures taken from established international datasets such as the Media Pluralism Monitor, Euromedia Ownership Monitor, International IDEA, Freedom House and others. The application of this framework reveals a stark contrast between the high resilience of Nordic countries and the critical risk levels observed in contexts like Hungary and Türkiye. However, beyond these extremes, results indicate that significant vulnerabilities emerge within consolidated democracies, challenging the assumption that capture is confined to transitional regimes. This suggests that systemic imbalances — driven by economic fragility and polarization — are creating fertile ground for capture across Europe. By the time the conference takes place, the results of the risk map will be compiled and presented through the launch of a dedicated website.

JOS15 Economy and Journalism

PP 0367 Nonprofit news and Pennsylvania's local journalism ecosystem under strain: Promises and limits

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This contribution examines how nonprofit news is being mobilized as a response to the structural crisis of U.S. local news through a focused case study of Pennsylvania. Over the past two decades, the collapse of commercial advertising revenues, the rise of digital platforms as gatekeepers, and the contraction of newsroom employment have produced "news deserts," weakened civic oversight, and intensified political and informational polarization across the globe. In this context,

nonprofit, mission-driven journalism has emerged as a prominent and hopeful alternative, promising to sustain watchdog, investigative, and community-centered coverage that commercial models struggle to support. At the same time, growing dependence on philanthropy and uneven policy interventions raise questions about the long-term sustainability and equity of the nonprofit turn, particularly in geographically and politically divided states such as Pennsylvania.

This mixed-methods study addresses two questions: how key stakeholders envision the role of nonprofit news in creating a sustainable, robust local news ecosystem in Pennsylvania, and how they assess its potential to provide statewide coverage and reach underserved communities. Pennsylvania offers a revealing site for examining these questions for three reasons: it is a paradigmatic "purple" U.S. battleground state marked by deep political cleavages; it is a leading hub of nonprofit news innovation; and, at the same time, it is grappling with expanding news deserts and policy proposals to end support for public media. Empirically, the article draws on eleven semi-structured interviews with nonprofit news executives, journalists, funders, and advisors operating at local and statewide levels across Pennsylvania. Using qualitative thematic analysis, we develop themes to interpret how actors within this ecosystem understand the promises and limits of nonprofit journalism as a remedy for market failures in local news. This qualitative design enables an in-depth exploration of how normative commitments, funding structures, and institutional legacies shape stakeholders' visions of a sustainable information system. To further triangulate the interview data, we map nonprofit news expenditures using public tax records and compare them with county-level local journalist employment records in Pennsylvania, identifying news deserts and supporting key findings from the interviews.

The findings show that stakeholders widely view nonprofit news as indispensable to rebuilding local news and civic information, while also underscoring that financial sustainability—though under significant strain—is only one dimension of the challenge. Both interview participants and the expenditure mapping highlight how nonprofit growth risks reproducing longstanding geographic inequities by concentrating resources in major metropolitan centers and leaving rural, low-income, and historically marginalized communities underserved. Interviewees across the sample also express growing recognition that philanthropy and audience revenue alone are unlikely to secure durable coverage. Stakeholders increasingly view public investment as a pragmatic response to the limits of nonprofit funding models. Taken together, the study argues that nonprofit journalism should be understood not merely as an organizational form, but as an arena within a broader, contested reimagining of how democratic societies will finance and govern robust local news in the post-crisis era.

JOS16 Emotions and Journalism

PP 0382 Emotionalization of (political) news: Journalists' perspective across four European countries

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Emotionalisation of news is widely regarded as a pervasive phenomenon affecting general journalistic practices, even in contexts where objectivity remains the cardinal value of the profession. With the advent of social media and hybridization of media systems scholars emphasize the growing salience of moralized communication and inclination to define issues in terms of right and wrong, harm, or responsibility. In platformised media environments the use of moral language on the one hand enhances visibility, authority, and audience engagement but on the other reshapes journalistic boundary work and contributes to the growing polarisation of the public spheres (Marie & Petersen, 2025; Solovev & Pröllochs, 2022).

Transnational trends in contemporary journalism are primarily shaped by economic drivers, technological innovation, and changing audience behaviours (Newman & Cherubini, 2025). A digital media transformation has led to increasing reliance on social media and mobile platforms. Due to 'platformisation' of news (Hase et al., 2023), journalistic media face severe challenges of attracting and retaining audiences, eroding trust in journalistic media (Ejaz et al., 2024), the rise of alternative communicators spreading disinformation on digital platforms (Bail, 2022), and questioning journalistic authority in describing reality (Mosca & Quaranta, 2021).

To overcome emerging economic challenges, media are increasingly relying on personalised, emotionalized, and moralised content strategies to cater to digital audiences and exploring AI-driven tools to enhance efficiency and cost-effectiveness through automation in content production. Hence, emotionalization can be understood as a continuum of practices that meets a range of interests for media professionals (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Peters, 2011).

While much of the research on the emotionalization of news has focused on content, less is known about the manner in which journalists internalize production constraints and public expectations (Schwinges, 2024). This paper aims to study explanations of news selection and framing of political events.

For this study, we conducted a series of in-depth interviews (from 2 to 5 per country) with journalists in France, Germany, Hungary, and Poland. The selection of countries allows us to compare Western and Eastern European media systems, with different journalistic cultures and relations between state and media (Brüggemann et al., 2014; Hallin & Mancini, 2004;

Herrero et al. 2017; Mellado, 2021). We recruited participants of the study based on three criteria: (a) type of medium; (b) type of media ownership (public versus private), and (c) professional profile (political journalists and editors).

In line with the previous observation on the emotional turn in news coverage, reporters and editors admitted that there is commercial pressure on them to seek emotionally charged news to attract audience attention. Although reporters try to stay detached, they are prone to framing politics as a conflict and defining political issues in terms of right and wrong because such a narration "sells" news better. However, it comes at a price: in some extreme cases (terrorist attacks, crime stories), the emotional involvement of the journalists can become a health danger, and trauma units have been established in some newsrooms.

JOS16 Emotions and Journalism

PP 0383 Effects of Constructive Journalism on emotions, attitudes, and behavior: A meta-analysis and systematic review

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Journalism plays a central role in democratic societies by keeping citizens informed and encouraging political participation. However, research indicates that the negativity bias in journalism can harm audiences' well-being by fuelling feelings of pessimism, anxiety and powerlessness, which are also among the main reasons why audiences choose to avoid the news.

In response to these concerns, constructive journalism (CJ) has emerged as an alternative approach to covering news. CJ aims to provide a nuanced, optimistic, and solutions-focused portrayal of current events. To achieve this, CJ applies strategies from positive psychology to news production to help individuals and society flourish. The concept describes an umbrella term, encompassing solutions journalism and restorative narratives.

Since the introduction of CJ in 2011 (Gyldensted, 2011), many have tested its effects, including more positive emotions after reading the news, increased engagement, higher self-efficacy, and stronger intentions to act after reading constructive news (K. McIntyre & Lough, 2023). However, the effects of CJ do not seem to be clear-cut. While studies indicate consistent effects of CJ on positive emotions, inconsistent effects are observed for engagement and behavioral intentions (K. McIntyre & Lough, 2023). To clearly outline the effects of CJ, we conduct a systematic review and a meta-analysis of studies testing effects of CJ, solution journalism and restorative narratives to (a) identify which key outcomes are experimentally tested, (b) establish the average effect sizes of CJ on these key audience outcomes, (c) test whether effects vary depending on CJ conceptualizations, and (d) assess the presence of publication bias. This will offer relevant insights into the potential of CJ and offer practical guidance for news organizations.

We follow the state-of-the-art in meta-analysis. The study has been pre-registered (anonymous link). We use the PRISMA guidelines in our screening process to maximize transparency; the codebook, data, and data analysis will be accessible on OSF. We follow PICOS to determine the eligibility of papers included in the framework. The keywords we used are: constructive journalism OR solutions journalism OR solution journalism OR restorative narrative OR restorative journalism.

We include experimental studies that evaluate the impact of CJ compared to a full or traditional journalistic control on a general population sample. Selected papers must quantitatively assess outcomes and be available in peer-reviewed journals or grey literature, and be published between 2011 and October 13, 2025. We searched Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, Google Scholar, and OSF preprints, to ensure a comprehensive evidence base. The search process resulted in a total N = 2781. After the deduplication process, the final sample consists of N = 2307 studies.

These studies will be screened and double-coded by two authors familiar with CJ. For data analysis, we will conduct a series of meta-regressions using the available effect sizes and split the sample by DV to analyze each DV separately. We will also assess publication bias.

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JOS16 Emotions and Journalism

PP 0384 The emotions of collaborative journalism

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Recent scholarship conceptualizes collaborative journalism as formal or informal arrangements in which news organizations and other actors share data, sources and editorial decision-making to produce coverage beyond the capacity of any single

newsroom (Stonbely 2017; Sambrook 2018; Jenkins & Graves 2019; 2022; Mesquita 2023; Mesquita et al. 2025). Research on rural and local journalism further shows how collaboration functions as a survival strategy for resource-strapped community newsrooms, with journalists expressing broadly positive attitudes toward both formal and informal partnerships (Lincoln et al. 2025). At the same time, studies of emotions and affect in journalism demonstrate how feeling rules, emotional labor and affective attachments shape newswork and professional identity (Pantti 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen 2020; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen 2021; Kotišová 2025).

Yet these strands of scholarship rarely intersect. While existing studies map the organizational, economic and field-level logics of collaboration, we know little about the emotional and affective dynamics through which collaborative practices are lived in small local newsrooms.

This study addresses this gap by examining inter-organizational collaboration in a Norwegian initiative—the collaborative desk—established by the Local Association of Local Newspapers (LLA), the public broadcaster NRK, and the Centre for Investigative Journalism (SUJO). Partly state-funded, the desk produces data packages for more than 110 local newspapers, providing statistics and editorial resources for locally produced news stories. Within the Norwegian media system—where strong local newspapers coexist with a powerful public service broadcaster—this initiative offers a compelling case for examining the emotional dynamics of inter-organizational journalism.

Drawing on Sara Ahmed's theory of emotions, the article examines how affective dynamics shape innovative forms of collaborative journalism. Rather than treating emotions as individual psychological states, Ahmed (2004) conceptualizes emotions as relational forces that circulate between bodies, objects and practices, forming "affective economies" that bind actors together and orient them toward particular futures. The study asks: How does collaboration between local newsrooms and the Norwegian Samarbeidsdesken shape emotional orientations that structure journalistic work and professional judgement in local newsrooms?

Building on research linking collaborative journalism to networked news production, resource pressures on local media and new models of public-interest reporting (Graves & Konieczna 2015; Jenkins & Graves 2019; 2022), the study contributes a local–digital perspective on collaboration between a national desk and small local newsrooms, and advances understanding of the emotional textures of collaborative journalism.

Drawing on qualitative interviews with local journalists, collaborating organizational actors and desk staff, the analysis shows how emotions such as enthusiasm, trust, guilt and vulnerability "stick" to tools, roles and expectations. Investigative methods become charged with excitement and professional pride; cross-newsroom workflows evoke trust, investment and guilt; and shared editorial goals create affective attachments that both sustain and strain collaborative processes. These emotions are not by-products of collaboration but constitutive forces that organize journalistic labor and hierarchies, legitimize editorial decisions, and shape understandings of professional ideals and accountability. Attending to emotional dynamics thus clarifies how collaborative projects succeed, falter, and reshape professional identities in an increasingly interconnected media landscape.

JOS16 Emotions and Journalism

PP 0385 Exploring emotions and metajournalistic discourses in European journalism festivals

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This paper examines the presence and role of emotions in European journalism festivals. Journalism festivals are live events that platform metajournalistic discourses in the form of presentations, panel discussions, and performances. Through an ethnographic study of two prominent European journalism festivals, the Voices Festival of Journalism and Media Freedom and the International Journalism Festival, this paper brings together three developing strands of journalism studies – emotions in journalism, metajournalistic discourses, and journalism spaces – to analyze how emotions facilitate metajournalistic discourses in live events.

Metajournalistic discourses – discourses about journalism's definition, role, and boundaries – have been particularly useful in understanding how journalism is adapting amidst contemporary challenges, though they have largely been analyzed in textual and audiovisual sites, such as trade journals and social media (Carlson, 2016). Metajournalistic discourses also provide insight into various aspects of emotions in journalism, such as the role of emotions in journalistic practice (Luo, 2025). While these insights have been empirically and methodologically valuable, they prioritize sites of metajournalistic discourse that primarily circulate online. Journalism festivals therefore offer a novel opportunity to examine offline metajournalistic discourses in spaces that bring together journalists, media professionals, and civilian audiences, whereby emotions circulate in-person.

The potential of live journalism events to revive and repair audience connection has already been identified in the confluence of journalism and performing arts (Postema, 2024; Adams, 2021). Within this body of work, live events are considered as a way to slow down the news cycle and bring audiences physically and metaphorically closer to journalists and their stories. Drawing on arguments from the "spatial turn" in social sciences and humanities, the spaces and places of journalism are considered with utmost importance in interrogating how audiences encounter and experience news, both online and

offline (Vodanovic, 2022; Peters, 2012). This paper builds on the spatial turn and brings emotions into the mix by centering the analysis on the role of emotions in the physical spaces of journalism festivals. In addition to the empirical contribution, this paper puts forth a methodological contribution through the use of participant ethnography as a tool for identifying and analyzing emotions in spaces where live metajournalistic discourses take place, which includes the aforementioned journalism festivals but can be applied in future studies of journalism awards ceremonies, film festivals, and even academic conferences.

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JOS16 Emotions and Journalism

PP 0386 The objectivity norm as journalism's emotional regime. Revisiting the possibilities for humanitarian coverage

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This paper challenges the use and usefulness of the objectivity norm for contemporary journalistic practice. The objectivity norm — ostensibly the antithesis to emotionality — has long represented Western journalism's reigning "emotional regime." Emotional regimes, coined by historian William Reddy (2001), reveal how social (and professional) norms emerge and change, including who or what has the power to determine them. We argue that an evolution of journalism's reigning emotional regime – which currently de-values emotional expression and connection to the work – would enrich and improve coverage.

There's been a significant "emotional turn" in journalism studies, with emotions-based research revealing much about journalists' relationships with their sources and audiences, the influence of social media on newsmakers' well-being, and even what makes journalists happy (Beckett & Deuze, 2016; Kotisova, 2019; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2018, 2019). And yet, mainstream newsrooms are cautious to acknowledge the role of emotions in journalism, preferring instead to repeat the value of "objectivity" as their mantra. Thus, newsroom leaders valorize depersonalization, distance and focus on "just the facts," forcing journalists to navigate a paradox: they must follow rules that stigmatize emotions, while performing a job that is inherently emotional.

We argue that Western journalism's emotional regimes are shifting towards a stronger explicit embrace of emotional motivation in journalism work for several reasons – because of social media's emotional architecture, closer interaction with audiences, the industry's diversification, and political developments. However, change hasn't been wholesale and contemporary news coverage still suggests adherence to longstanding norms, driven by the objectivity regime.

Given the impact these have on communities and political debates, we use a critical discourse analysis to examine the coverage of U.S. President Donald Trump's mass deportations across two influential newspapers. To study if and how emotional regimes are shifting, we analyze articles (N = 150) published in June 2025 (the month with the most deportations so far) by the The New York Times—a national paper —and the Los Angeles Times—a regional paper. Through thematic analysis we zoom in on power (im)balances and how these play out in coverage of one of the U.S.'s largest immigrant populations, highly affected by the deportations.

Overall, our paper reveals a focus on political conflict and an overreliance on official sources – namely, Trump and his team. Previous research has found that the objectivity norm is a huge driver of this, and, notably, we found even local journalists continue this overreliance, despite ample work revealing Trump and his team aren't reliable.

This begs the question: what kind of coverage could we see if journalists didn't feel limited by emotion rules that make it difficult for them to adjust their practice, even and especially when they feel (emotionally) compelled to do so? This matters as journalists are increasingly covering politicians, like Trump, who are ushering in their own emotional regimes, marked by populism, anger, and fear. At a time when old political norms are replaced with new ones, we argue newsroom leaders should consider the role of emotions while conceptualizing new rules for covering increasingly charged and polarized realities.

JOS17 AI in Journalism II.

PP 0469 "Did ChatGPT write this?": Emotional response of audiences to automated contents and AI Authorship in Journalism

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The rise of news content produced wholly or partially through the use of generative artificial intelligence has reignited the debate surrounding its use in the media and its acceptance by audiences. Moving beyond technologically deterministic assumptions that equate the introduction of new tools with innovation, more nuanced perspectives highlight the central role of human agency, particularly in how media professionals and audiences engage with technological developments. In other words, for an innovation to be effectively realised in the field of media, it must go through a process of social appropriation (Peña-Fernández, Lazkano-Arrillaga & Larrondo-Ureta, 2019). From this perspective, audience trust and the progressive normalisation of AI-generated content will be just as crucial as the technology itself (Van Dalen, 2012).In this process of adoption, three factors have traditionally been considered indicative of audience acceptance of AI-generated content: quality, credibility, and interest.

In the case of quality, even prior to the emergence of the most advanced generative AI models, experiments suggested that AI-generated texts were already perceived by audiences as effectively replicating the informational style of journalistic writing (Clerwall, 2014; Haim & Graefe, 2017; Lui & Wei, 2019). Nor does credibility appear to be significantly affected in the case of AI-generated journalistic texts—at least when it comes to informational content—although findings in this area have been more mixed and context-specific (Gillespie, 2014; Jung et al., 2017; Tandoc, Yao & Wu, 2020; Waddell, 2018; 2019; Henestrosa, Greving & Kimmerle, 2023: Gutiérrez-Caneda, 2024; Aleessawi & Alzubi, 2024).

So far, the most pronounced difference in audience perception of AI-generated texts has concerned their readability—that is, how easily and enjoyably the content can be read. In this respect, journalistic texts produced by humans are generally perceived as richer and more engaging, particularly when they move beyond routine reporting and into areas requiring interpretation or opinion (Graefe et al., 2018; Melin et al., 2018; Zheng, Zhong & Yang, 2018; González-Arias, Chatzikoumi & López-García, 2024; Sui, 2025; Zhau, Zhou & Wang, 2025).

To this end, this study describes the results of an experiment that explored the emotional responses generated by AI-produced content, using neuroscience techniques. By monitoring implicit behavioral reactions to different stimuli, this method sheds light on aspects that traditional analyses often overlook—such as the degree of emotional involvement, arousal, and overall affective tone—in relation to the perceived authorship of AI and its role in producing journalistic content.

The experiment followed a quantitative research design, drawing on a representative sample of the target demographic—individuals aged between 18 and 70. A total of 100 participants were recruited (margin of error of ±7%, confidence level of 95%). Stratified sampling with proportional allocation was used, taking into account variables such as age, gender, and level of education. The sessions were conducted in a controlled environment.

The results suggest that text type and variables such as gender have a comparatively limited impact on the acceptance of AI-generated content and its perceived authorship, whereas factors such as the opinion-based nature of the text and the age of the audience appear to exert a greater influence.

JOS17 AI in Journalism II.

PP 0470 A world of difference? Key predictors of attitudes towards AI in news across six culturally and geographically diverse countries

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As many news organisations have started experimenting with (generative) AI in their journalistic workflows, a fast-growing body of literature has begun to map journalists' perceptions of these and other future initiatives (Mattis & de Vreese, 2025). This work usually identifies both hopes (e.g. increased workflow efficiencies) and concerns (e.g. decreasing editorial independence), highlighting that AI adoption must not necessarily be negative but could also provide added value to readers – for instance by making news more accessible, accurate, and diverse (Lin & Lewis, 2024).

However, it is unclear whether audiences share this view. While there are several relevant surveys and technical reports on public perceptions of AI in journalism (Mattis & de Vreese, 2025), most focus on isolated use cases or remain largely descriptive. Accordingly, we still know relatively little about the extent to which audience attitudes towards AI-supported journalism vary across countries and between different groups of individuals.

Hence, this study sets out to systematically compare attitudes towards AI-supported journalism across six culturally and geographically diverse countries (Brazil, Denmark, Japan, South Africa, The Netherlands, and the US). Drawing on survey

data from April 2025 (overall *N* = 6,961), our study zooms in on two concepts that we consider crucial in this context: (1) AI news engagement intentions and (2) attitudes towards hyper-personalised news.

To capture AI news engagement intentions, we asked respondents how willing they were to a) read, b) share, c) trust, d) talk about, and e) ignore news if they knew from the beginning that it was created with AI. As such, even though attitudes might not neatly translate into behaviour, AI news engagement intentions can still provide a helpful window into public demand for AI-supported journalism.

To an extent, the same is also true for attitudes towards hyper-personalisation, although they arguably pertain to a more specific application of AI. Here, we asked respondents to what extent they agreed that hyper-personalised news would a) help them engage with news content, b) give them more relevant news, c) improve their user experience, d) risk their data privacy, e) make them miss out on important news and f) help spread false and misleading information.

In addition to providing a comparative overview of these attitudes on a global scale, our key contribution is answering the following:

RQ1: To what extent can differences in a) AI news engagement intentions and b) attitudes towards hyper-personalised news be explained by geographical and individual-level characteristics?

That is, using hierarchical regression analyses, we hope to tease out whether different audience perceptions can primarily be attributed to their country of origin, individual-level factors such as demographics or institutional trust, or a combination of both. Understanding such variations will not only benefit academics, but also helps news organisations that hope to successfully navigate AI adoption in their everyday work.

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JOS17 AI in Journalism II.

PP 0471 Journalism education in the age of generative AI: adapting to new professional roles

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The progressive integration of artificial intelligence, especially in its generative form, into newsrooms is causing significant disruptions in journalistic processes and informational outputs (Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024). Professional roles and newsroom teams are being profoundly reshaped by the changes introduced by disruptive technologies within the media ecosystem (Túñez-López et al., 2021). Consequently, these transformations are also reflected in the education and training of future journalists and other information professionals (Ufarte Ruiz et al., 2020), although not always with the necessary speed or precision.

The present study seeks to analyse these changes in depth, both in the professional and educational spheres, while also examining whether the transformations across different ecosystems are aligned, thereby enabling effective labour market integration for future information professionals. To this end, ten in-depth interviews were conducted with experts and professionals working in the fields of journalism and artificial intelligence. In parallel, the study analyses the curricula of the ten European universities considered the most prestigious according to the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2025 in the category Communication & Media Studies, which ranks institutions based on academic reputation, employer reputation, and research impact.

The initial findings indicate that the professional profiles most in demand as a result of the integration of generative AI into newsrooms include a technological component that was not as prominent in the past, along with a growing tendency towards multidisciplinary teams in which technological profiles (from fields such as engineering) are combined with more socially oriented ones (such as communication or journalism). As a result of this trend, a new role emerges: the "translational person," described by one of the interviewees as a professional who combines competencies from both domains and acts as an intermediary between colleagues from each field, facilitating more effective communication in the workplace.

Regarding the educational ecosystem, the results point to the incorporation of subjects related to artificial intelligence into new curricula, as well as to other disruptive technologies such as virtual or augmented reality. However, it is also important to note that a review of the existing literature reveals certain difficulties for universities in adapting to these changes, due both to the bureaucratic processes required to modify curricula and to the rapid pace at which technological innovations are being integrated into newsrooms.

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JOS17 AI in Journalism II.

PP 0472 How journalism stabilises AI imaginaries: Sociotechnical imaginaries of artificial intelligence in cultural heritage reporting in China (2022–2025)

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As generative artificial intelligence (AI) increasingly intersects with cultural governance, journalism plays a central role in explaining why AI is necessary, how it should be governed, and who should benefit from its deployment. In the domain of cultural heritage, news reporting does not merely convey technological developments but actively shapes the legitimacy, desirability, and future orientation of AI-driven cultural policies.

This study draws on the concept of sociotechnical imaginaries to examine how AI futures are constructed and stabilised through journalistic discourse. Sociotechnical imaginaries are understood as collectively held and institutionally performed visions of desirable futures that link technological innovation to social order (Jasanoff, 2015; Richter et al., 2023). Integrating this perspective with scholarship on journalism as an institutional actor, the study conceptualises mainstream news media as a stabilising device that organises technological meaning through agenda setting, evidentiary regimes, and speaker ecologies. Within the Chinese context, these processes are embedded in technonationalist narratives aligning technological modernisation with state capacity and cultural sovereignty (Ding, 2018; Goode, 2021; Zhao, 2008). China's hierarchical media system also enables analysis of how a shared national narrative generates differentiated imaginaries across media tiers (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Stockmann, 2013). Existing journalism studies on AI focus on newsroom automation, professional ethics, or labour transformation, paying less attention to how journalism stratifies AI imaginaries within governance fields such as cultural heritage.

Based on this framework, the study addresses three research questions: (RQ1) How do Chinese mainstream media construct sociotechnical imaginaries of AI in cultural heritage reporting, in terms of visions, problem definitions, and value commitments? (RQ2) How do different media tiers produce stratified variants of a shared national imaginary, particularly regarding narrative emphasis and risk boundaries? (RQ3) Through which speaker configurations and evidentiary practices does journalism authorise AI imaginaries and normalise them as common sense in cultural governance?

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-method design analysing 5,670 news articles (2022–2025) from nine major Chinese news outlets. First, Python-based text processing and topic modelling using BERTopic are employed to identify dominant thematic clusters, keywords, and their temporal evolution, mapping the overall agenda and narrative trajectories of AI–heritage reporting. Second, stratified samples are subjected to qualitative coding in MAXQDA through two coding rounds (open and axial coding). Coding dimensions include imaginaries (visions, risks, governance solutions), speaker types (government, experts, firms, publics), and evidentiary sources (policy documents, scientific research, pilot projects, international comparisons), with intercoder reliability checks ensuring analytical consistency. Third, coded results are re-analysed in Python through cross-tabulations by media tier, topic, and time period, and interpreted through an institutional journalism lens that accounts for organisational positioning and policy linkages.

Findings show a dominant imaginary of "AI-enabled cultural governance," with value commitments centred on efficiency, governance capacity, and national competitiveness. Speaker ecologies privilege government and expert authority; firms are positioned as solution providers, and publics appear primarily as beneficiaries. Media tiers diverge: central outlets foreground state strategy and legitimacy, sectoral media stress technical pathways and standards, and commercial portals highlight application scenarios. Ethical and social risks are largely framed as manageable within governance arrangements.

JOS17 AI in Journalism II.

PP 0473 The co-production of ai imaginaries in the global south: A comparative analysis of media and policy narratives in South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya (2016–2025)

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This paper proposes a comparative study of the co-production of Artificial Intelligence (AI) socio-technical imaginaries in three leading digital economies of Africa, South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria, from 2016 to 2025. Grounded in the theoretical framework of socio-technical imaginaries, framing and agenda-setting theory the research investigates how collectively

held visions of desirable AI futures are articulated, contested, and institutionalized through the dynamic interplay between online news media and national policy discourses.

While significant scholarship has examined AI imaginaries in the Global North, a critical gap exists in understanding their formation and stabilization within African contexts, where distinct political histories, media landscapes, and development trajectories shape technological engagement. This study addresses this gap by arguing that AI is not merely a set of tools but a socially contested concept, whose public meaning and developmental pathway are shaped by a symbiotic exchange between media narratives and government policy action. Media frames public understanding and generates demand for political response, while policy codifies and validates certain visions, sidelining others.

Methodologically, the research employs a multi-phase qualitative design within a social constructivist paradigm. It integrates a framing analysis of 300 online news articles from mainstream newspapers in the three countries; a policy frame analysis of key national AI strategy documents; and in-depth interviews with journalists and policymakers. A subsequent frame alignment analysis will systematically compare media and policy frames to identify mechanisms of convergence, divergence, and co-production.

The study is guided by an overarching research question: How do online news media and government policy texts in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria interact to co-produce and consolidate specific AI socio-technical imaginaries? This is explored through sub-questions examining the dominant imaginaries in each domain, the discursive mechanisms of their co-production and consolidation, and the contrasting national characteristics shaped by local media systems and policy approaches.

The research predicts that media coverage will predominantly rely on elite and government sources, leading to frames that align with official policy discourses (H1). It further hypothesizes thematic correlation between media frames and policy language, reflecting a process of stabilization (H2), with cross-country variation in the strength of this alignment linked to the institutionalization of AI governance (H3).

By tracing the circulation and institutionalization of AI narratives, this research aims to contribute a geographically balanced, theoretically robust understanding of how technological futures are imagined in the Global South. It seeks to decenter dominant Northern narratives and illuminate the complex processes through which African societies negotiate and embed AI into their social, political, and economic fabrics, thereby advancing scholarship on socio-technical imaginaries, science and technology studies, and comparative media analysis.

JOS18 Platforms and News

PP 0474 Soft news, more views? The platformization of Swedish legacy news media on TikTok

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TikTok has rapidly become one of the most influential platforms among the so-called Generation Z and a consequential actor in a digital environment long dominated by US-based Big Tech companies (Liu & Yang, 2022). Originally launched as Musical.ly and primarily oriented towards entertainment, TikTok has gradually become a key platform for news and opinion formation (Vázquez-Herrero, 2022). Its short-video logic shapes how content circulates and has influenced how competitors such as Instagram and YouTube redesign their affordances towards similar formats (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). TikTok's algorithmic recommendation systems tend to prioritise content that is entertaining and emotionally engaging (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2023), raising concerns about how journalistic content is shaped when legacy news organisations adapt to platform affordances. Research suggests that news on TikTok often adopts affective and engaging forms rather than prioritising informational depth (Hendrickx, 2024), making TikTok a relevant site for re-assessing the relationship between soft and hard news in relation to platformization.

This paper investigates the platformization of journalism in Sweden through a quantitative content analysis of Swedish legacy news organisations' TikTok output. We examine how these organisations use TikTok affordances (e.g., short-video storytelling, rapid editing, music, text overlays, direct address, and TikTok-specific expressive conventions) and how these features shape the softness or hardness of news thematically and in presentation. Analytically, we also draw on Reinemann et al.'s (2012) multidimensional framework of soft and hard news to capture variation across topic, focus, style, and sourcing characteristics.

The study is based on a stratified random sample of posts drawn from the official TikTok accounts of Swedish legacy outlets during the entire year of 2025, covering public service, national tabloids, morning newspapers, and local newspapers (n = 1500). The analysis combines manual and automated coding procedures to map news topics, sources, platform-specific stylistic features, and engagement metrics (views and "digs"). We construct a soft/hard news index based on Reinemann et al.'s indicators and relate degrees of news softening to engagement.

Preliminary results show a clear softening of news on TikTok. The content tends to align with soft news both thematically and in presentation, with a dominance of episodic framing and short event-based news. Softening is closely tied to affordances such as fast-paced editing and prominent text overlays, which support emotional intensification and the compressed narrative structure typical for the platform. Presentation relies to a great extent on emotional reporting,

while the style remains largely impersonal rather than personal. Softening scores also tend to be positively associated with visibility and engagement (views and digs), although the strength of this relationship varies across outlets. Despite these platform-related similarities, the analysis identifies traces of historically rooted organisational differences across public service, tabloids, morning press, and local newspapers. Moreover, against the backdrop of decades of Swedish and Nordic media research (eg. Karlsson & Truedson, 2019), we find that TikTok journalism provides young people with increased visibility and agency as sources, suggesting a potential broadening of whose voices and views are represented in the news.

JOS18 Platforms and News

PP 0475 Beyond Metrics: The Platformized Epistemology of Datafied News Work

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The emergence of 'datafied news work' (Kammer et al., 2025) has brought to the introduction of new actors in the production of news, with implications for journalistic epistemology, i.e. the institutionalized way of producing knowledge in the various forms of journalism (Ekström & Westlund, 2019). Previous research has mostly been concerned with platform companies, driven by commercial and market logics, providing the infrastructures news organizations rely on to produce and distribute the news (Nechushtai, 2018; Kristensen & Møller Hartley, 2023). However, platforms are also 'infrastructures for datafication', or technological systems that make possible the collection, organization, exchange and analysis of various types of data (Pybus et al., 2025). So, if we think of platforms as infrastructures in themselves, and pay attention to their technical workings, what other logics emerge as playing a role in the production of news? How do they interact with the long-standing epistemology of journalism? This paper provides an answer to these questions making use of data from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three Danish news organizations. The data analyzed consists of field notes gathered while shadowing two journalists in each organization, as well as of interviews with the same journalists and other relevant actors within the organizations.

The paper relies on van Dijck and Poell's (2013) definition of logics as the principles and mechanisms through which platforms process information to explore how they interact with the epistemology of journalism. The paper finds that, even though previous studies have highlighted the prominent role of the logic of datafication in processes of news production through the study of audience metrics in newsrooms (Christin, 2020; Petre, 2021), moving beyond the specific focus on metrics and exploring how journalists encounter and deal with platform infrastructures allows to understand that there are more logics at play than solely datafication; namely, programmability, popularity and connectivity. The contributions of the paper are two-folded: first, by showing that a variety of platform logics are at play and getting enmeshed with the epistemology of journalism, the paper provides an empirical contribution to the study of datafied news production. Second, by arguing for the need to move beyond the specific focus on metrics and their impact on news production, the paper contributes conceptually to the academic discussions about the datafication and platformization of journalism. This, in turn, opens up the possibility for further research to explore the impact of platform infrastructures and their logics in other domains of news work, such as distribution, marketing and management.

JOS18 Platforms and News

PP 0476 How newsy is news? Measuring news conventionality across outlets, topics, and platforms

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What constitutes "news" has long been a foundational but contested question in journalism studies. While editorial journalism continues to endorse norms of factuality, neutrality, balance, and source attribution as defining features of news, empirical research has repeatedly shown that journalistic texts vary substantially in their degree of adherence to these conventions. Yet, despite extensive scholarship on news values, genres, and professional norms, there has been no systematic, large-scale attempt to operationalise and compare degrees of news conventionality across different forms of journalistic content.

This paper addresses this gap by developing and applying a News Conventionality Index (NCI), a composite measure capturing linguistic and discursive features associated with conventional, fact-oriented news reporting. The analysis draws on a large corpus of approximately 225,000 articles published in 2023 by 22 Norwegian news outlets across multiple platforms. Drawing on prior research on news genres, the index integrates five theoretically grounded dimensions: epistemic conventionality, subjectivity and evaluative stance, stylistic and emotional intensity, temporal anchoring, and discourse mode. Each dimension is operationalised through a set of linguistic features, defined as recurrent lexical, multi-word, and stylistic markers associated with that dimension. These features are organised into dimension-specific lexicons constructed inductively and deductively, based on prior research and close inspection of the corpus. Feature extraction and aggregation were conducted in RStudio using the *quanteda* package, which enabled efficient tokenisation, lexicon matching,

and document-level calculation across the corpus. All features were normalised by text length and standardised prior to aggregation into dimension-level scores and the composite index.

As an initial validity check, we compare NCI scores between news articles and opinion pieces. The results show a pronounced and statistically robust distinction between the two genres: news articles score significantly higher on overall conventionality than opinion articles (Cohen's d = 0.64), indicating a substantially more source-oriented, impersonal, and stylistically restrained mode of writing. Dimension-level analyses further demonstrate that this difference is primarily driven by lower subjectivity, reduced stylistic intensity, and weaker argumentative and narrative structuring, rather than by differences in temporal anchoring. Building on this validation, the full paper will apply the NCI to systematically compare degrees of news conventionality across newsroom types (local, regional, national, and niche outlets), journalistic topics, and platforms for publication, including differences between proprietary news websites and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok). A preliminary analysis across newsroom types indicates that regional newspapers exhibit significantly higher levels of news conventionality than local, national, and niche outlets, which cluster more closely together in their degree of conventionality.

Rather than treating "news" as a uniform category, the analysis maps how adherence to conventional news norms varies within the contemporary news ecosystem, and how these variations align with organizational context, topical focus, and platform-specific publishing environments. In doing so, the study contributes a scalable empirical approach for examining how core professional norms of journalism are unevenly enacted in practice, and offers a basis for more fine-grained debates about genre boundaries, platformisation, and the conditions under which journalistic authority is maintained, adapted, or reconfigured.

JOS18 Platforms and News

PP 0477 'Reworking the news': News remediation for social media platforms

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This study investigates how news is adapted for social media, using remediation as a theoretical lens. Over the past two decades, social media have gradually become dominant platforms for news consumption, and they now serve as the primary news source for a significant portion of the public (Newman et al., 2025). In response to these evolving audience habits, as well as a need for survival, journalistic outlets established a presence on these platforms (Batsell, 2015). News-making therefore often no longer ends with writing stories for the newspaper or the news website; articles travel further to social media platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok.

The growing influence of social media, in turn, has disrupted traditional journalistic norms and practices and challenged long-established editorial routines (Hansen, 2020; Wu, 2018). Social media platforms operate under different rules than the publishers' own platforms, each with its own technical infrastructure, affordances, algorithmic curation, and audience demographics (Cetina Presuel & Martínez Sierra, 2019; Chua, 2023; Hase et al., 2023). Therefore, content cannot be simply copy-pasted or 'shovelled' but must be altered and tailored accordingly. This process occurs within a modern media ecosystem that is simultaneously *hybrid*, *high-choice*, and *liquid*, all of which significantly shapes how news moves across platforms (see e.g;, Barnard, 2024; Van Aelst et al., 2017; Bauman, 2000).

This study introduces remediation as a conceptual lens to explore how news is continually reconfigured across this modern media system. Drawing on Bolter and Grusin's (1999) foundational work, remediation describes how media forms refashion one another—absorbing, improving, or reinterpreting prior media formats to adapt to emerging technological and cultural conditions. The concept captures the mutual influence between old and new media. I argue this remediation framework provides a bridge between platform logic and editorial practice and can deepen our understanding of how contemporary news is actively created in response to the evolving logics of digital platforms. To illustrate these theoretical insights, the study draws on concrete examples of social media news production

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of contemporary social media journalism by linking theoretical and practical perspectives. By foregrounding remediation as a lens for analysis, it provides insight into the ways news is continually reshaped for digital platforms, the influence of platform affordances on journalistic work, and the evolving role of social media editors in shaping public news consumption.

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JOS18 Platforms and News

PP 0478 TikTok as a news ecosystem: An analysis of actors, content and information disorders during a power blackout

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TikTok has become one of the main social platforms for accessing and reporting news. When an event occurs, media outlets, journalists, and all kinds of users share what happened on this already consolidated platform. This underscores TikTok's role as a relevant channel for news access, although its distinctive features are more closely associated with short-form video, entertainment, and algorithmic recommendation. In this scenario, disinformation also tends to proliferate, with the risk of quickly reaching large audiences.

Following the nationwide blackout in Spain in April 2025, this study aims to analyze the information circulating on TikTok during the event and, consequently, what a user would find when accessing the platform. Using the TikTok Research API, we retrieved content posted within the first 36 hours (n = 62,643 posts). The analysis began with a reconstruction of the event's timeline on TikTok, focusing on the role of news media, the types of actors reporting on the blackout, and the disinformation narratives that emerged.

In response to an unexpected and highly relevant news event, the circulation and consumption of content on TikTok reveal certain trends and the coexistence of journalistic actors with other users. Media outlets played a significant role in the volume of news content published about the blackout–21 of the 25 users who post the most videos are media outlets–; however, their content was not the most widely circulated or viewed– 8 of the 25 users with the most views are media outlets. Algorithmic mediation therefore continues to play a key role in the dissemination of videos on TikTok. This explains why non-journalistic accounts emerged that published five or more videos in a very short period, appropriating content from other accounts to republish or remix in order to achieve high view counts.

During the first 36 hours after the blackout, the most viewed content focused on what people were experiencing at that moment and in their own contexts. News outlets began posting within the first half hour, reporting on the power outage in several cities and across the country. Soon after, different disinformation narratives started spreading, driven by anonymous users, content creators, and pseudo-media. These narratives included various conspiracy theories and went viral due to TikTok's content circulation logic.

In events such as the blackout, users seek quick and easily accessible information on social networks like TikTok, while news media struggle to compete in terms of speed, virality, and volume of content. Moreover, the limited presence of government authorities further fueled the spread of disinformation that appealed directly to emotion, circulated within specific communities, and thrived on algorithmic recommendation.

Any user accessing TikTok to learn about an event such as the blackout will encounter a mix of videos curated by the platform's algorithm. Within this algorithm-driven news ecosystem, media outlets, pseudo-media, content creators, news-fluencers, and other actors interact. Most of this content will not have been produced or verified by professional journalists, posing a significant risk for audiences who believe they are well-informed by relying on platforms like TikTok.

JOS19 Journalistic Content I.

PP 0489 Meme digests as indicators of tabloidization in Ukrainian and Polish online news media

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The article analyses the genre-related, functional, and narrative characteristics of meme digests in Ukrainian and Polish online news media during the crisis periods of COVID-19 and the full-scale war. The object of the study comprises 251 meme digests published between December 2019 and December 2024 by the Polish outlets Wiadomości, Fakt, Rzeczpospolita, and Wyborcza, and the Ukrainian outlets Suspilne, Ukrainska Pravda, Obozrevatel, and UNIAN. The selection of these media is determined by their leading audience reach in their respective countries, alongside differences in editorial policy and market positioning, which directly affect the quality of content and adherence to professional journalistic standards.

Memes are conceptualised as multimodal texts and carriers of cultural information (Dawkins, 2016; Shifman, 2014; Wójcycka, 2019; Skott, 2022), while meme digests are treated as journalistic compilations of such texts in various compositional formats, both with and without accompanying journalistic commentary. Data were collected using Google tools (Search Engine and Colab), and subsequently analysed through quantitative and qualitative content analysis and the logical method, which enabled the identification, examination, and systematisation of instances where memes function as elements of journalistic digests.

The intensification of memes within journalistic news discourse during crisis periods may be interpreted as a manifestation of tabloidization, expressed through shifting media priorities and boundaries of taste (Johansson, 2007, 32). In academic discourse, tabloidization is associated with moral panic (Sparkl, 2000; Conboy, 2021) and is defined as a commercially

successful yet ethically problematic form of journalism dominated by sensationalism, dramatization, and clichés (Miller, 2012). Excessive visualisation influences news selection and may distort the audience's informational worldview (Djupsund, 1998: 12), as online media, social networks, and video platforms have provided tabloidization with new tools of audience engagement, particularly visual ones (Hanusch, 2013; Magin, 2021; Collier, 2021: 270).

The quantitative findings show that in both countries meme digests are published primarily by tabloid outlets, whose core readership consists of men aged 55–64 and 65+ with secondary and higher education. Such media generally favour large volumes of content, within which journalistic standards of accuracy, balance, and separation of facts from commentary and evaluation are frequently violated.

In Ukrainian media, the number of meme digests is almost twice as high as in Polish media (69% and 31% respectively), primarily due to materials covering the full-scale war (40% and 20%), politics (8% and 5.6%), show business and culture (9.6% and 2.8%). Sport is the only topic where the Polish outlet Fakt dominates, with 16.5% compared to 0.4% in the Ukrainian outlets Obozrevatel and UNIAN.

The qualitative results indicate that outlets employing tabloid strategies in their editorial policy tend to favour structurally and semantically simplified meme digests. These typically take the form of lists of meme collages (images with captions) or galleries (using dedicated website structural elements), introduced by a brief note outlining the news trigger. While journalistic text may accompany the meme collages, it is usually trivial in nature, merely describing the images without providing the additional context necessary for deeper understanding.

JOS19 Journalistic Content I.

PP 0490 Selection and construction in the science news cycle: A Belgian case study of university press release newsworthiness and churnalism during the COVID-19 pandemic

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News reports remain an important actor for the communication of scientific research to the non-scientific public. Journalists are however frequently scrutinized for misrepresenting scientific research, where it is questioned whether the news media reflect a reduced but appropriate picture of the scientific reality, or if journalists' inclination to focus on the newsworthy aspects results in a distorted image. Simultaneously, further cost-cutting and the emergence of a 24/7 news cycle have led to a situation where less scientific experts, often needed to assess the value of scientific research, are employed in the news media, with those who remain seeing their workloads rise. Consequently, science journalism becomes more dependent on information subsidies by sources, where scientists and universities are specifically viewed with trustworthiness.

On the side of academia, multiple studies have already shown that communication departments of universities have significantly expanded their press offices who consider it crucial to attract news media attention. Here, press releases remain relevant for both university public relations and science communication. Due to this public relations expansion at universities and the further shrinking of science journalism, the power relation between journalists and press officers might shift further. This could enhance so-called churnalism, where journalists textually reproduce (public relations) information subsidies. A critical stance should therefore be taken with regards to both the press officers writing their press releases and journalists producing their news articles, where understanding how scientific findings, advances, controversies, and debates become newsworthy remains important.

In the context of our article, the study of newsworthiness deals with understanding why certain press releases end up as being covered by journalists in news media stories *and* how these stories are consequently constructed (Kroon & Schafraad, 2013). We studied this selection and construction through a quantitative content analysis of all research-focused press releases (271) sent out by a Belgian university and 763 related news articles during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our research shows that these university press releases are very successful in being selected for news production (79.7%), with both the amount of news factors and specific news factors (*continuity* and *trigger*) present in the press release positively influencing journalistic selection. Most notable is the ubiquity of churnalism, measured through a validated computer script (Vonk et al., 2024), with almost all news articles containing textual copy-pasting. This leads us to argue that the responsibility for accurate science communication increasingly lies with those who communicate to journalists. Every science communicator should therefore uphold a form of journalistic and scientific deontology. They should not fear their chances of 'making the news'. *How* they make the news should be their priority.

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JOS19 Journalistic Content I.

PP 0491 How to measure invisible diversity in television news: A quantitative content analysis approach

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Quantitative content analyses of media have traditionally focused on visible diversity markers such as gender or ethnicity, inferred from appearance. This approach leaves dimensions like sexual orientation, transgender identity, and other non-visible characteristics inconsistently measured or confined to qualitative research. Scholars have addressed the need for more quantitative intersectional studies on representation that explore more than one identity marker (Scharrer et al., 2022). This paper addresses that gap by presenting a codebook designed to operationalize different diversity markers, including invisible aspects, in television news content. News content presents specific methodological challenges for quantitatively analyzing diversity compared to other media: news segments feature brief appearances by diverse actors whose characteristics may not always be explicitly stated, or only when it is relevant to the topic. Paradoxically, audiences often know about elite news actors' identities (e.g., celebrities or politicians), such as sexual, transgender, or ethnic identities. Nonetheless, traditional quantitative content analyses exclude these aspects, relying exclusively on manifest content visible within the media text itself. This approach leads to a blind spot, where identities that are publicly known but not mentioned within news coverage remain uncounted in quantitative analyses.

The codebook was developed within the Dutch-speaking Belgian context and builds on the Electronic News Archive (ENA), an archive that has coded all primetime news broadcasts since 2003. Its existing codebook is based on manifest characteristics and already includes aspects related to gender (operationalized as man/woman) skin color (white/non-white), name (Belgian-sounding/not Belgian-sounding), and disability (disabled/non-disabled). This presentation focuses on how we extend that codebook to provide coding instructions for actor characteristics including gender identity (also encompassing non-binary people), sexual orientation, intersex and transgender identities, ethnicity, religion, and nationality. We distinguish between four layers of representation: what is visibly represented, explicitly mentioned, contextually implied, and externally verifiable. For external verification, we employ Wikipedia as a standardized knowledge source, deliberately excluding coder assumptions from the process. This approach, while labor-intensive, allows researchers to capture diversity beyond visual cues or subjective interpretation.

The extended codebook is currently being applied by 13 trained coders to all primetime television news episodes broadcast by commercial network VTM and public broadcaster VRT in 2024 (N = 730). Intercoder reliability testing will be completed in February 2025, with full coding finished by May 2025. All coding is performed on the actor level (N = 21,608).

During this presentation, we lay out the codebook and the methodological challenges it poses. We also present the empirical findings that demonstrate which diversity markers were externally validated but would have remained invisible in traditional quantitative content analysis, illustrating the added value of our approach. By making invisible diversity visible through systematic measurement, we provide journalism scholars with tools to assess whether news media are quantitatively representing different demographic groups or perpetuating representational gaps.

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JOS19 Journalistic Content I.

PP 0492 Framing and deliberation: An analysis of frames in the coverage of public debates in Europe

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The media have historically played an essential role in public opinion debates, as they provide a particular view of reality (Dzur, 2002). From the conceptual perspective of the deliberative public sphere (Strömbäck, 2005; Splendore et al., 2024), the development of inclusive discussions is essential for the functioning of democracy. There are issues of global scope regarding which journalists can adopt a deliberative role. It is also important to understand how these issues are framed in the media, since this contributes to the normalization of certain positions (Lecheler and de Vreese, 2019).

In this context, the objective of this research is to explore how the use of some news frames favors or limits the deliberative potential of journalism on issues of public interest. Three research questions are posed: What types of frames predominate journalistic coverage of public debates? Do these frames contribute to reasoned deliberation? Which frames are transnational, and which are culturally specific?

To this end, a content analysis of news published by media outlets in the five most populous countries in Europe (France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain) is used, with three news organizations per country. Specifically, all publications from those 15 media outlets are examined regarding several global issues for 2025: the awarding of the Nobel

Peace Prize, the Gaza Peace Plan, COP30, and the 80th Session of the UN General Assembly. Qualitative analysis is based on framing theory as media outlets usually select a particular approach (frame) to report on an event (Entman, 1993). Through prior coding of frames, the study of these frames allows for the identification of the premises and representations of the debates generated around these issues.

Initial results point to the homogeneity of certain frames, while a genuinely deliberative perspective is often missed. However, differences between countries and media outlets are also evident, with some providing a more conducive frame for deliberation. This study contributes to current debates on the mission of journalism in a changing digital age, arguing that deliberative news coverage could improve the democratic accountability of political actors at the European level.

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JOS19 Journalistic Content I.

PP 0493 Social media logics beyond social media? A comparative analysis of BBC and CNN's short video carousels

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Audiences increasingly consume vertical, short videos across social media platforms, ranging from TikTok to Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts (Laaksonen et al., 2024). In 2014, as traditional news organisations struggled to retain audiences, they adapted to social media's shift toward video by creating and disseminating novel types of news content on these platforms, fostering a relationship marked by dependency (Meese & Hurcombe, 2021; Ekström & Westlund, 2019). In a more underexplored trend, the same news organisations are adopting short-form videos on their own proprietary platforms. Consequently, the homepages of news websites and mobile apps increasingly feature scrolling video carousels containing videos that display many similarities with those shared on social media platforms. Despite their prominence, there is a lack of scholarly knowledge on how news media utilise these carousels, what types of videos populate them, and how these choices relate to journalism and/or social media norms.

This comparative content analysis examines the video carousel publishing strategies employed by two of the world's leading Western digital news outlets, the BBC and CNN. Focusing on homepage video carousels within each outlet's news apps, the study analyses 572 videos and accompanying thumbnails collected over a constructed two-week period between August and November 2025. The research investigates how legacy broadcast news organisations are adapting short-form video to their institutional logics.

By coding video characteristics such as topic and platform-centric features (Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024), the study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How do short-form video carousel publishing strategies differ between BBC and CNN?
RQ2: What are the primary short-form video topics featured on BBC and CNN homepage carousels?
RQ3: What social media platform-centric features do short-form videos featured on BBC and CNN homepage carousels adopt?

Short-form video is an increasingly important communication format, particularly for younger audiences. Yet, many questions remain regarding its integration into existing legacy news organisational practices and its future prospects. Therefore, this research will offer insights into the media's approach to short-form video and how interface design shapes the future of news communication. The study is informed by existing literature on news organisations' approach to short-form video and journalism norms (e.g. Hase et al., 2023; Hendrickx & Vazquez-Herrero, 2024; Wirz & Zai, 2025). While conceptually, we draw on literature on platform isomorphism, the dislocation of news and journalism, and social media journalism. Initial analysis highlights varied approaches. The BBC has a consistent strategy that prioritises promotional and non-news-related videos, while CNN is more experimental and news-focused.

JOS20 Audiences and Journalism I.

PP 0576 Certainty in uncertain times: How news media repertoires shape war-threat perceptions in the age of misinformation

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Rising geopolitical tensions across the globe requires Europe shifting to a "wartime mindset", as NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced last year (NATO, n.d.). Yet, in an age of misinformation, fragmented media landscapes, and declining institutional trust, the increasingly complex processes of *how* citizens use information to form war-threat perceptions and *how certain* they feel about their own risk perceptions, remains understudied. Understanding these processes is critical, as citizens' perceptions and confidence in assessing war-threats can directly shape their capacity to respond adaptively.

Literature has already shown that while war-threat perceptions affect important preventive behavior (Slezackova et al., 2024), they are subjective and shaped more by heuristics or biases than by systematic information processing (Eliezer Yudkowsky, 2008). Yet, today's information environment has undergone several critical changes regarding the increased challenges of misinformation (Ecker et al., 2024), which warrants a novel approach to studying what informs war-threat perceptions. Therefore, this study introduces the role of *uncertainty*, a central concept in misinformation literature (Lyons et al., 2021; Wood et al., 2023), to understand war-threat perceptions. We argue that uncertainty in perceptions is particularly relevant in the context of war threats, where information ambiguity and subjectivity are already high and uncertainty may only amplify fear, influence emotional response, and complicate decision making (e.g., preventive actions like evacuation) (Tandoc & Lee, 2022).

Accordingly, this project explores the information sources that citizens rely on for war-related news and whether distinct information-use repertoires emerge. Next, we assess how these repertoires shape the formation and certainty of war-threat perceptions and the association of risk (un)certainty with perceived efficacy in threat coping and with practical preparedness behaviors.

Theoretically, we integrate research on information source reliance (Adetayo et al., 2022; Humprecht et al., 2020) and attitude certainty (Aven, 2025; Błaszczyk & Pieńkowski, 2025) into the Social Amplification of Risk Framework (Kasperson et al., 2022), advancing a novel perspective on how risk perceptions acquire confidence. By expanding contemporary studies of misinformation (van der Meer & Hameleers, 2025), through mapping how media repertoires and perceived misinformation salience shape both risk perceptions and the confidence with which they are held, we offer critical insights into how citizens can navigate complex information landscapes and enhance resilience to anxiety, manipulation, and maladaptive responses.

We conduct a preregistered quota-balanced cross-national survey across eight European countries (Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Poland, and Lithuania (total $N = 4{,}000$)) to assess how war proximity, cultural attitudes towards uncertainty, and resilience to misinformation shape these dynamics. Participants report on primary war-information sources, their frequency of use (Wilson & Maceviciute, 2025), and their perceived misinformation salience (van der Meer & Hameleers, 2025). War-threat perceptions are measured via multi-dimensional scales capturing perceived affect, susceptibility, and severity of war (Walpole & Wilson, 2021), as well as citizens' attitude certainty (Petrocelli et al., 2007). Finally, personal coping efficacy and emergency preparedness (based on the European Union's 2025 preparedness strategies) are measured. The survey is programmed, and translated and ready to be fielded late January 2026, a full paper is expected before summer 2026.

JOS20 Audiences and Journalism I.

PP 0577 Domesticating disinformation: How news audience practices shape the resonance of disinformation

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Disinformation campaigns have recurrently been shown to strategically promote narratives that resonate with specific societies or communities, and instrumentalize local sensibilities or grievances (Innes et al., 2021; Nehring et al., 2023; Bastos & Tuters, 2023; Tolz & Hutchings, 2023; Laputska & Yeliseyeu, 2024). Much less is known about how these phenomena of resonance play out at audience levels. In this paper, we turn to the concept of domestication, as previously used in the study of foreign news to describe the localization processes that render far-away events comprehensible or relevant for local audiences (Clausen 2004), and operationalize it in the study of the way audiences engage with disinformation. We examine how audiences use their local knowledge, cultural and political repertoires and personal experiences to make sense of disinformation, in terms of both assessing its credibility and constructing its meaningfulness in local contexts, and how these modes of engagement in their turn create or undermine the credibility of disinformation narratives.

The research is part of a larger project on disinformation practices and their variations in cultural and geopolitical contexts. A total of 24 focus groups with 146 participants were conducted in Poland, Romania, Serbia and the Arabic speaking

communities in the UK, six for each case, divided into three age groups, and balanced by gender. In each country, participants discussed false or misleading news and social media posts drawn from the local media environment and related to the war in Ukraine, more specifically public appearances of president Zelenskyy, and the existence of biolabs in Ukraine. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic coding in CAQDAS software. Based on this empirical material, we ask: (**RQ 1) What are the main sources of knowledge or domains of experience in which audiences anchor their assessment of misleading content? (RQ 2) What is the function of these domestication strategies in engaging with disinformation?**

We find that audiences employed references to personal histories, professional knowledge, educational experience, popular geographies, local and international politics and national history to both assess the items discussed as credible or not, and to construct their local relevance. In each case, we find that audiences referred back to major themes of their local discoursive contexts, which anchored their discussions, from political corruption to the COVID-19 pandemic, from narratives of victimhood to those of historic greatness. We connect these domestication strategies to the traditional audience stances described by Toepfl as affirmative, negotiated and oppositional (Toepfl, 2013), following Hall's classic encoding/decoding model, and show how they can serve both critical reflection and rejection of disinformation, but also the acceptance of disinformation narratives. By conceptually bridging the study of foreign news and studies of news audiences with the emerging field of audience studies of disinformation, we aim to offer a model of the way audiences navigate the current information environment that goes beyond information deficit models of combating disinformation, and argue for the importance of local news cultures and participatory practices in which public knowledge takes shape and in which strategic disinformation narratives prove resonant or dissonant.

JOS20 Audiences and Journalism I.

PP 0578 Time well spent? Exploring emotional engagement with news through native experience sampling

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Both within journalism studies and practice, the discourse on audience engagement has predominantly centered around audience analytics: software that monitors and collects audience behavior, translating it into quantifiable metrics such as clicks or attention time. Newsroom practices are shaped by the analysis of these metrics (Tandoc, 2019), under the presumption that this enables journalists to tailor news content more effectively to audience interests and thereby increase engagement. However, interpreting audience behavior and inferring motivations is a notoriously fraught process because of the many limitations associated with audience metrics (Napoli, 2011). Therefore, Steensen et al. (2020) have urged scholars to acknowledge these limitations and complement metrics with alternative methods.

Answering that plea, the first aim of our study was to empirically capture dimensions of engagement beyond behavior. Proposed as an alternative to time spent (i.e., quantity of news consumption), we developed the notion of "time well spent", focused on the quality of the news experience. The second aim was to develop and trial an innovative 'native experience sampling' method that addressed limitations of previous methodologies by concurrently assessing the discrepancy between behavior (as operationalized through metrics) and value. Concretely, this involved presenting news users with a brief pop-up questionnaire querying their emotional state and experience of worthwhileness after reaching a certain scroll depth in a news article. Uniquely, this took place via the infrastructure of the actual news websites of Dutch newspapers NRC and Noordhollands Dagblad and Belgian newspaper De Standaard.

Our findings, triangulating multi-level regression analyses with random intercepts and qualitative thematic analysis, suggest that for news to qualify as *time well spent* several preconditions must be met. First, an emotional response is a vital positive force in enabling *time well spent*. Worthwhileness was positively associated with several emotional responses compared to cases in which no emotional response was elicited. Contrary to expectations, these emotions did not solely have to be positively valenced: strong negative emotions such as disturbance or sadness often provided the most worthwhile experiences. Qualitative analyses clarified what made users' time worthwhile, with justifications referencing satisfied needs, including knowledge-based needs (e.g., "give me perspective," "teach me something new") and feeling-based needs (e.g., "acknowledge me," "give me someone else's perspective").

We conclude by reflecting on the promise of our NESM methodology for journalistic practice. The user needs and form- and style-related criteria inferred from NESM can function as evaluative benchmarks, enabling news organizations to assess how journalistic formats, topics, and stylistic choices align with users' ideal news experiences. While these facets may not be easily aggregated into a single metric, recurring use of NESM may help news organizations systematically reflect on the multidimensional nature of news experiences, complementing behavioral metrics.

JOS20 Audiences and Journalism I.

PP 0579 How people encounter and interpret political information in a real-life context

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How people encounter and interpret political information in a real-life context

Understanding how media shape people's ideas about politics has become increasingly challenging in a highly digitalized and fragmented media environment. Citizens no longer rely on a small set of shared news outlets; instead, they navigate diverse and individualized information trajectories across professional news media, social media platforms, messaging apps, influencers, entertainment media, and interpersonal conversations. These varied encounters jointly inform political sense-making, yet most existing research captures only fragments of this process.

Much research focuses on limited information sources or narrowly defined populations. For example, studies on polarization frequently rely on Twitter/X data (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021), while experimental research on mis- and disinformation necessarily isolates specific media stimuli (Greene & Murphy, 2021). Large-scale international surveys provide valuable comparative insights (Newman et al., 2024), but do not sufficiently capture differences related to socio-economic status or ethnicity. Qualitative studies, in contrast, offer rich insights into sense-making practices within specific communities (e.g. Xia, 2024), yet often lack generalizability. While these approaches have advanced understanding of media effects, mechanisms, and practices, they fall short of capturing how people's everyday media use *as a whole* informs their ideas about politics.

This study argues that a holistic, inclusive approach is needed to better understand mediated political sense-making. It therefore addresses the following research question: **How do people encounter and interpret political information in a real-life context?** "Real-life" refers to studying political information practices as they unfold in everyday settings, across online and offline sources, and among diverse social groups. By doing so, the study contributes empirically to key theoretical debates in media and communication studies, including filter bubbles, selective exposure, and cognitive dissonance.

To meet the methodological challenges posed by fragmented media use, the study employs an innovative mixed-methods design that leverages digitalization. First, it uses **digital trace data** derived from data donation, whereby participants request, download, and donate data collected about them by platforms such as Google, Meta, and TikTok (Boeschoten et al., 2023). Digital trace data enable detailed reconstruction of the political information participants encounter and engage with online, without relying on recall or self-report (Ohme et al., 2024). Second, the study integrates **a two-month, bi-weekly qualitative diary study** (Moe & Ytre-Arne, 2022), in which participants submit structured reflections about two political topics (Donald Trump; Dutch national elections) they (may) have encountered during the previous days, including their own interpretations of this information. Retrospectively, the same topics are identified within participants' donated digital trace data using state-of-the-art machine learning techniques, including large language models (Laurer et al., 2024), followed by manual and/or automated content analysis. Diary data are analyzed inductively using grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Prioritizing inclusivity, recruitment combines a panel designed to approximate a representative sample of the Dutch population with targeted outreach to groups typically underrepresented in media research, such as individuals with lower educational levels or non-Western backgrounds. This approach enables systematic comparison across groups and advances understanding of shared and divergent patterns in how people encounter and interpret political information.

JOS20 Audiences and Journalism I.

PP 0580 Ukraine's wartime news fatigue: Lessons for global journalism

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Across diverse media environments, news organizations increasingly struggle to sustain audience engagement with the news. The constant flow of updates, alerts, and emotionally charged reporting that is also amplified by digital platforms, has transformed news consumption into a demanding and often exhausting practice.

Ukraine provides a particularly revealing context in which to examine these dynamics. Since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, audiences have been exposed to an extended period of high-intensity, crisis-driven news, marked by constant updates, emotional strain, and existential stakes (Internews Ukraine, 2025). This prolonged wartime media environment offers a unique opportunity to observe how sustained exposure to critical news reshapes audience engagement, coping strategies, and patterns of selective avoidance over time. Rather than treating Ukraine as an exceptional or isolated case, this study approaches it as an analytical lens through which broader processes of news fatigue can be examined in conditions of prolonged uncertainty.

The proposed study examins the consequences of protracted exposure to crisis-driven news for audience engagement and news avoidance. It is situated within existing scholarship on news fatigue and avoidance (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2019; Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2022), selective and topic-based news avoidance (Schäfer, Betakova & Lecheler, 2022), and global trends in news consumption and trust documented in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2023), allowing our findings to be positioned within global shifts in attention, trust, and audience behavior.

The study employs an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. It consists of five linked stages: a survey of 1,000 respondents aged 18–60 living in cities with populations over 50,000; a content analysis of 1,878 articles published by ten local news outlets; six months of automated media monitoring across approximately 110 outlets using LOOQME.IO; an analysis of Google Analytics data from ten independent local news sites in five different macro-regions of the country; and expert interviews to contextualize findings and inform recommendations.

The findings challenge a common assumption that news avoidance reflects apathy or disengagement from public life. Instead, audiences described filtering and rationing news as an act of self-preservation in response to emotional saturation. Participants prioritized practical, reliable, and actionable information, while repetitive, sensational, or emotionally overwhelming coverage accelerated disengagement. Long-term crisis reporting that lacked local relevance and emotional sensitivity was found to intensify news fatigue.

Importantly, the study highlights a strong demand for credible, context-rich local journalism that addresses people's everyday challenges—coverage that national and international media often cannot replicate. These findings point to an opportunity for local news organizations to rebuild trust and deepen engagement by providing information that is both socially meaningful and directly relevant to community life.

While grounded in the Ukrainian wartime media context, this presentation uses empirical findings to illuminate broader dynamics of news fatigue that are increasingly relevant across crisis-affected media environments. The findings contribute to discussions on how news organizations can sustain meaningful public connection under conditions of prolonged uncertainty.

JOS21 Journalists I.

PP 0581 Journalistic cultures across Belgium's linguistic communities: A quantitative content analysis of journalistic roles and themes in the news

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Belgium's multilingual media landscape reflects linguistic and political segmentation with the country's two dominant communities, the French- and Dutch-speaking media, operating under separate regulators, press councils, and accountability instruments (Raeymaeckers & Heinderyckx, 2017). Their media markets differ in its ownership, economic trends and audience behaviour (De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 2010). Public and private broadcasters and newspapers publish in one language targeting one community (De Bens & Raeymaeckers, 2010; Sinardet et al. 2004). Against this backdrop, Hallin and Mancini (2004) classify Belgium within the *Democratic Corporatist Model*, marked by moderate pluralism, press freedom and strong media regulation, yet note that media systems are rarely monolithic. The Francophone media have been linked to traits of the *Polarized-Pluralist Model*, with close ties to political actors and more monitoring, interventionist, and collaborative roles (Bonin et al., 2017; Hallin & Mancini, 2004), while Flemish media exhibit stronger commercialization and tabloidization, resembling the *Liberal Model* (Vandenberghe & Raermaeckers, 2024). Yet clear empirical evidence of distinctive media systems and journalistic cultures between the communities is lacking. Prior research (Mertens et al., 2019), based on surveys, found only minor differences in perceived role conceptions.

Through a manual quantitative content analysis, this research systematically compares whether Belgium's two media landscapes translate into distinct journalism cultures. Specifically this study analyses the presence of distinct journalistic cultural traits of the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking community, based on two indicators:

Journalistic role performance: The sub-question is: do journalistic role performances differ between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking media? This study operationalises roles across six non-mutually exclusive role dimensions: interventionist, watchdog, loyal, service, infotainment, and civic. By assessing how roles manifest in content, this study moves beyond survey-based role conceptions while conceptualizing the collective outcome of newsroom decisions and reporting styles (Van Dalen et al., 2011; Mertens et al., 2019).

Themes selected: In parallel, we analyse thematic focus to assess whether Flemish and Francophone outlets prioritize different topics (e.g., politics, economy, crime, culture, international affairs, and so on).

The dataset comprises two television news programs, two radio news services, two newspapers, and two online news platforms from both language communities, sampled over six months in 2026. It includes public and private outlets as well as popular and elite segments, amounting to approximately 950 news items. This cross-platform, cross-community design allows direct comparisons of role performance and thematic focus across ownership models and audience orientations.

This presentation will show these results and aims to contribute to refining Hallin & Mancini's framework for linguistically segmented contexts and to deepen understanding of journalism's functions in divided societies.

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JOS21 Journalists I.

PP 0582 Reconstructing journalistic authority through news literacy initiatives: Evidence from Swiss news media

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In French-speaking Switzerland, journalism's relational authority –the socially constructed right to be listened to (Carlson, 2017)– is increasingly challenged. This erosion is linked to broader transformations in news organisations, including digitisation, newsroom downsizing, and audience disaffection (Udris & Eisenegger, 2025). In this context, news literacy —understood as, enhancing knowledge of news production processes and audiences' ability to engage with them (Tully et al., 2021)— has emerged as a strategic response to rebuild audience relationships and journalistic legitimacy (Amigo et al., 2023). Yet, despite extensive scholarship on news literacy, the role of news organisations in shaping this field remains underexplored.

Addressing this gap, this study examines how news organisations in French-speaking Switzerland mobilise pedagogical approaches to journalism. It investigates:

RQ1. What initiatives adopting a pedagogical approach to news-making are undertaken by news organisations in French-speaking Switzerland?
RQ2. How do these initiatives conceptualise the journalist-public relationship?
RQ3. How do journalists perceive the initiatives' goals towards audiences?

To address these questions, we conducted a mapping of 143 initiatives underway between 2023 and 2025 by news organisations in French-speaking Switzerland. Using their latest publicly available description (websites, social media, etc.), initiatives were categorised based on their main characteristics (Pignard-Cheynel & Amigo, 2023) to identify the most common initiative types. A thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012) of initiative descriptions was used to identify underlying audience conceptualisations. Additionally, we conducted 15 interviews between November 2023 and April 2024 with journalists involved in the initiatives. Questions explored journalists' perceptions of the initiatives' goals and assumptions about audiences. Interview transcripts were analysed thematically.

We identified six types of initiatives, with "newsrooms' guided tours" (33%) and "journalistic training for audiences" (31%) being the most prevalent. These formats offer controlled access to the traditionally closed spaces and practices of news production. Across initiative descriptions, the journalist–public relationship is predominantly framed as asymmetrical: audiences are positioned as "curious outsiders" (37%), invited to discover journalism's inner workings and spaces, or as "novice learners" (44%), expected to acquire journalistic skills under professional supervision. Interview data show that, beyond promoting transparency and critical thinking, journalists view these initiatives as a way to reaffirm their distinctiveness. In doing so, they frame audiences as needing guidance to navigate the information ecosystem, emphasising the need to help them distinguish between content grounded in journalistic ethics and content produced by non-professionals.

Overall, findings suggest that news literacy initiatives are mobilised as a way to rebuild journalistic authority beyond news content itself, by cultivating relational forms of engagement and creating spaces that promise greater accessibility to journalism. News organisations approach news literacy not only as the transmission of professional skills and standards, but also as an experiential, relational, and at times affective practice. However, this relational turn remains marked by a paradox: while initiatives promote closeness and participation, journalists continue to maintain control over access, roles, and professional boundaries. This study contributes to discussions analysing news literacy as a site of boundary work (Jaakkola, 2020), showing how journalists seek to reconstruct authority while responding to contested legitimacy.

JOS21 Journalists I.

PP 0583 Resisting illiberal public spheres: Journalistic agency under democratic decline

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The decline of liberal democracy has become a global trend. This de-democratisation process is tied to the rise of "illiberal public spheres", where disinformation, polarisation and the political instrumentalisation of the media erode democratic discourse and institutions (Štětka & Mihelj, 2024). Journalists, as key actors in this ecosystem, are not only subject to these pressures but also positioned to resist them, making their responses critical to fully understanding democratic decline. This paper develops a theoretical model of journalistic resistance through the analysis of three underexplored cases that share trajectories of democratic decline but differ significantly in their media systems: Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing efforts to de-westernise debates in journalism studies and respond to calls to diversify theory-building through research grounded in the Global South (Wasserman, 2018).

Journalistic resistance is broadly defined as the conscious acts of journalists to oppose adverse and threatening conditions with the intent to improve their safety and practices (Bustamante & Relly, 2021). Several studies argue that journalists and news organisations can facilitate de-democratisation when 'captured' or 'instrumentalised' by business and political elites (Schiffrin, 2021; Selvik & Høigilt, 2023). However, few studies have examined and theorised journalistic resistance to these dynamics (Wright et al., 2024). The extant literature is often scattered across political science, communication and regional studies, which limits the development of a cohesive framework. Recent studies illustrate the diversity of resistance practices. In Israel, journalists responded to accusations of left-wing bias by applying "strategic bias", intentionally leaning to the right (Panievsky, 2022). In Poland and Slovakia, resistance became routinised through protest and engagement with professional associations (Benazzo, 2025). In the United States, journalists delayed tasks and "buried" content perceived as undermining editorial independence (Wright et al., 2024). Other important contributions have focused on violence and safety (Hughes, 2024; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023), providing critical insights into the resilience of journalists operating in hostile environments. The connections between resistance and resilience, whether in relation to violence, political instrumentalisation, or broader processes of de-democratisation, offer a foundation for theorising resistance beyond physical violence.

This study draws on news ethnography (Schultz, 2007), shadowing 10 political journalists in each country during editorial meetings and field assignments, complemented by semi-structured interviews. Journalists were recruited from three influential news organisations in each country, using desk research of recognised media monitoring reports and news archives. Fieldnotes and interview transcripts are analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019), following an inductive–deductive logic informed by both existing scholarship and emerging patterns in the data (Saldaña, 2021). This paper presents preliminary results from the first phase of fieldwork, outlining emergent forms of resistance, their organisational conditions, and their implications for theorising journalistic agency under de-democratisation.

JOS21 Journalists I.

PP 0584 Shared values and new structures - Transformative approaches of organizing media work in a meta-organization

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Technological advancements, declining traditional business models, and societal changes increasingly challenge the roles and structures of journalism and media organizations (Deuze & Witschge, 2020). In response, (non-)professional media actors are increasingly turning towards collective endeavors to sustain public interest journalism through alternative forms of organizing (Buschow & Suhr, 2024). Some of these collectives now take the form of 'meta-organizations' (Lowrey et al., 2023), organizations whose members are other organizations. By assuming specific support roles and functions, meta-organizations may foster collaboration and innovation among their members (Buschow & Suhr, 2022; Hepp & Loose, 2021). However, while meta-organizations offer a promising model for addressing current challenges for (journalistic) media, the influence of their organizational design (e.g. membership structure, decision-making processes) on (journalistic) media work remains underexplored. Accordingly, we ask: *"How does the organizational design of meta-organizations influence cross-organizational collaboration between professional and non-professional media actors?"*

To answer this questions, we draw on 'meta-organization' theory from the literature of Organization Studies (Ahrne & Brunsson, 2005), and insights from the literature of Journalism Studies (e.g. Buschow & Suhr, 2022), to examine forms, practices, and dynamics of collaboration within the Berlin-based meta-organization Publix. Founded in early 2024, it convenes around 30 (media) organizations to promote an independent media landscape, facilitate journalistic innovation, and strengthen democratic discourse. Publix provides infrastructure like co-working spaces, organizes event venues, provides funding, and facilitates open strategy processes to promote collaboration.

Employing a single case study design with embedded units (Yin, 2018), we analyze Publix and its member organizations, treating Publix as the primary case while analysing individual member organizations in greater depth. Our case study data base incorporates multiple data sources including publicly available and internal documents, observational notes, and semi-structured interviews conducted with the management team of Publix and different member organizations.

Based on our findings, we discuss the potential and challenges meta-organizations pose for collaborative (journalistic) media work. In doing so, this study contributes to the literature by exploring the influence of new organizational designs on contemporary journalistic production. Furthermore, being both manifestations and catalysts of transformations within the journalistic field, by analyzing such pioneering organizations (Hepp & Loose, 2021), we provide additional insights into the evolving institution of journalism and its structures and practices.

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JOS21 Journalists I.

PP 0585 Resilient aspirations? Crisis discourses and transnational career motivations of journalism's next generation

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Journalism is widely perceived as a profession in crisis, facing economic, technological, and normative challenges. Research shows that journalism students are particularly sensitive to these crisis narratives, which shape their professional expectations and long-term commitment to the field (Hanitzsch et al., 2016). Across different national contexts, students report growing uncertainty regarding job security, professional autonomy, and career prospects, even as intrinsic motivations remain remarkably stable (Mombelli & Beck, 2023; Hovden et al., 2009; Bjørnsen et al., 2007). These pressures are further intensified by debates on artificial intelligence in journalism, which often portray automation as a potential replacement for core journalistic tasks (Aitamurto & Boyles, 2025; Veenstra et al., 2025; Ng, 2024).

Yet, despite persistent discourses on precarity, shrinking newsrooms, technological disruption, and declining public trust in journalism, substantial numbers of young people continue to enter journalism programs worldwide. This paradox raises a central question: How do aspiring journalists justify their professional ambitions in a field dominated by crisis discourses, and how are these justifications shaped by culturally embedded understandings of journalism?

Addressing a key gap in journalism research that remains largely confined to nationally bounded perspectives, this study adopts a transnational approach. It draws on qualitative interviews with (so far) 21 journalism students from Ghana, China, Pakistan, Germany, Denmark, the US, and the UK, capturing diverse journalism cultures across different media systems. Building on research on journalism education and journalism cultures (Hanusch et al., 2015; Sanders et al., 2008), the study examines students' motivations for pursuing journalism and how these motivations are shaped by specific cultures, institutional contexts, and imaginaries of journalism.

Theoretically, the study integrates two complementary perspectives. First, it conceptualizes the "crisis of journalism" not merely as a set of economic or technological problems, but as a public and professional discourse that structures how journalism is imagined and evaluated, shaping students' expectations long before they enter the profession (Hanitzsch et al., 2016; Santos-Sainz, 2013). Second, it draws on Bourdieu's concept of illusio to explain why individuals continue to invest in journalism despite insecure working conditions. Illusio captures the belief that journalism remains "worth doing" even under conditions of precarity, low pay, political pressure, and technological uncertainty (Nölleke et al., 2022).

Our first findings reveal three central patterns. First, across all countries, students are strongly driven by intrinsic and idealistic motivations, particularly the desire to contribute to society, pursue meaningful work, and exercise creativity and autonomy. Second, crisis perceptions do not deter students, rather, they often reinforce journalism's perceived societal relevance, especially in contexts marked by political pressure or misinformation. Third, cultural contexts shape distinct motivational emphases, ranging from professional self-realization to a strong democratic mission. Together, these findings point to what we conceptualize as resilient aspirations, i.e., a form of professional motivations that persists and sometimes

intensifies despite structural pessimism and narratives of decline. At the same time, this resilience has clear limits. Many journalism students envisage a "plan B" in their career trajectories and signal an unwillingness to unconditionally accept precarious working conditions.

JOS22 Journalistic Content II.

PP 0601 Mapping esotericism in German news media using Structural Topic Modeling

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Established journalism plays a central role as an institutionalized epistemic authority in the production of knowledge. Especially in times of uncertainty, public reliance on journalistic media increases, reinforcing journalism's function in structuring and contextualizing knowledge claims. In digitalized media environments, however, peripheral actors such as esotericists introduce alternative forms of knowledge production that challenge established knowledge orders. The term esotericism encompasses non-hegemonic ideas and practices (Zander, 2021), ranging from seemingly harmless spiritual healing to worldviews that may function as gateways to anti-democratic narratives. In countries like Germany, where traditions such as homeopathy and Waldorf education have deep cultural roots, esoteric movements may pose challenges to science-based societies and democratic norms.

The growing relevance of esotericism is reflected in its frequent appearance in communication research, particularly in studies on conspiracy theories, right-wing populism, vaccine skepticism, extremist groups, or alternative media. Yet, in most of this research, esotericism remains a peripheral reference rather than a primary object of analysis. Little is known about how esotericism is perceived and contextualized in public discourse, and whether journalism recognizes it as a potential challenger to established knowledge orders. Addressing this gap, the present study examines which topics make esotericism visible in news coverage and how this has changed over time.

To explore this, Structural Topic Modeling was applied to a corpus of 4,394 news articles from German national news media (private and public broadcasters, qualitative and tabloid media) related to esotericism, collected via MediaCloud from 2013–2025. Articles were retrieved using the keyword stem "esoteri*". Based on model diagnostics, 15 topics were extracted and qualitatively interpreted using representative documents and FREX-weighted terms. The resulting topics range from "soft" topics like yoga or nature mysticism to "hard" topics like politically charged conspiracy-linked movements, as well as protest and mobilization.

The results reveal a clear shift in journalistic attention within esotericism-related topics. Lifestyle-oriented and culturally normalized practices, such as yoga and self-optimization, were highly visible prior to 2018 but declined substantially after 2020, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, topics with explicit societal or political relevance—such as "Reich Citizen" and "völkisch" movements and alternative medicine—have increased in prevalence since 2020.

These patterns suggest that journalism has recognized the evolving positioning of esoteric actors over time. Coverage shifts from lifestyle-oriented practices toward topics in which esoteric groups increasingly seek social and political relevance. By amplifying reporting on these "hard" topics while reducing attention to "soft" lifestyle-oriented forms, journalism registers esoteric actors as potential challengers to the established knowledge order and orients public understanding toward their broader societal implications. In responding selectively to these developments, journalism engages in boundary work, distinguishing between culturally normalized practices and forms of esotericism that carry political, epistemic, or social relevance. This differentiation illustrates how journalism perceives and manages emerging challenges to its epistemic authority.

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JOS22 Journalistic Content II.

PP 0602 Polarizing German media narratives on the Gaza war 2023–2025

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The crimes against humanity committed by Hamas-led groups on October 7, 2023, and the genocidal acts committed by Israeli authorities and security forces during the subsequent war on Gaza, are well documented and backed by international, non-governmental and research organizations (B'Tselem, 2025; OHCR, 2025; IAGS, 2025).

Yet, numerous studies indicate that western media are consistently falling short of maintaining the level of impartiality required in their coverage of Israel's military actions in Gaza (Centre for Media Monitoring, 2025; Mey, 2025; Richter, 2016). Among media professionals and scholars, there is a growing consensus that the level of bias in German media discourse on

Gaza is unprecedented, ultimately contributing to eroding trust in mainstream media coverage on the war (Fawzi et al.,2025; Goldmann, 2025; Sis, 2025; Brandenburg & Mahdhaoui, 2024). As low levels of media trust are frequently attributed to highly polarized issues (Blattner & Voelkel, 2023; Jackob et al., 2019), this raises a critical question: To what extent does German media reporting on the Gaza war employ frames that may deepen societal divisions and fuel public polarization?

To date, qualitative analyses on German media coverage of the Gaza war remain scarce. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the framing patterns (Entmann, 1993) employed by seven major German newspaper outlets from the conservative right (WELT, BILD, Focus, FAZ) to the liberal left (Spiegel, SZ, taz) over the first two years following October 7, 2023 until the ceasefire on October 10, 2025. Using a structuring qualitative content analysis, based on Kuckartz (2016) and Altheide (2000), on a stratified sample of 900 articles, this study investigates whether these frames vary by the political orientation of each newsroom, how they evolve over time, and whether the media's portrayal of the conflict contributes to public polarization or signals a broader ideological shift toward the political right.

Our preliminary findings confirm patterns found in international studies on Western media coverage of the Gaza war (Centre for Media Monitoring, 2025; Youmans, 2024; Zaboura, 2025): Across outlets, Israeli authorities and military sources dominate; Israeli victims are humanized, while Palestinian civilian casualties are often downplayed, conflated with Hamas and rarely linked to Israeli war crimes, obscuring responsibility. These patterns are more visible in German right-leaning media. Left-leaning media seem to adopt a more balanced stance towards 2025 but remain vague regarding historical context and genocide allegations. What stands out in German media coverage is the reframing of the Gaza war discourse in conservative-right newspapers into a highly polarized proxy debate about German migration. This framing strongly reflects patterns of affective polarization, characterized by an 'us-versus-them' narrative that contrasts 'terrorist migrants and their radical-left, antisemitic supporters' with 'reasonable Germans seeking to curb migration.' Rarely challenged in liberal-left newspapers, such a reframing of the Gaza war not only threatens to erode trust in mainstream media, but it relocates the Israel–Gaza war into a different highly-contested discursive arena, activating migration as a discursive trigger point (Mau et. al, 2024) that amplifies latent affective fault lines.

JOS22 Journalistic Content II.

PP 0603 American media coverage of sexual violence during warfare: The Case of Hamas Sex Crimes

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This paper investigates American media coverage of sexual violence during modern warfare. It demonstrates serious controversies and deficiencies via the case study of the Hamas attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023. This attack, along with the continuous holding of Israeli hostages, included vicious sexual violence against women and men, that were confirmed by a special UN investigation. Given that organized sex crimes have been silenced in past wars, it is crucial to study how weaponized sex crimes are exposed and how they are depicted in traditional and digital media. This paper studies how these specific war crimes were documented, investigated, and reported in mainstream media. Content analysis was used to trace reporting on Hamas' sex crimes from October 7, 2023, until the ceasefire of October 10, 2025. The media outlets that were studied were all situated in the US but of significant global influence: The New York Times, CNN, and the Associated Press. These outlets were chosen because of their liberal orientation and assumed to be more sensitive to sex crimes. The paper begins with a literature survey of the ways the American media covered or ignored sex crimes in recent wars including the Russia-Ukraine war and wars in the Middle East.

The analysis focused on:

- Coverage of early revelations of the sex crimes, reactions of local and international women's organizations, and the denial of these crimes.
- Publication of investigations of these specific crimes by professional bodies such as the UN, Dinah Project, Amnesty, and Israel Rape Crisis Center.
- Documentation of testimonies about these crimes in film (Screams Before Silence, 2024, Bearing Witness to the Massacre, 2025).
- Coverage of subsequent testimonies of released hostages that suffered sexual violence during their captivity.

PressReader was used to track coverage of these events. Keywords used were sex (or sexual) crimes, hostages, Gaza, Israel, and Hamas. The main finding was widespread omissions of events and published documents. The paper does presents rare investigations conducted by the media on the matter at the beginning of the war, especially the one published in the New York Times on December 28, 2023. It then presents the harsh critical responses to these publications and how they may have negatively affected the reporting patterns of additional new testimonies about these crimes. The results showed limited or no coverage of significant evidence, that derived from strong efforts to deny or efface testimonies of the victims, as part of information warfare. Despite the large body of available credible evidence, overall, news outlets created and disseminated a distorted and misleading reality of Hamas sex crimes. The distortion was motivated by both internal and external pressure in newsrooms, which derived from political agendas that called to deny these crimes, despite the evidence. The paper shows that these processes had affected even communication professionals and scholars. If coverage

of widely proven, premeditated sex crimes in warfare is directed by ideological predisposition, then truth is lost and so is the battle against such crimes in future wars.

JOS22 Journalistic Content II.

PP 0604 The DeepSeek chatbot as product, political instrument, and technological force: A comparative analysis of news discourses in the US, UK, and China

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This paper presents a comparative, qualitative discourse analysis of news articles in major news outlets in the US, UK, and China about DeepSeek, a large language model chatbot developed in China that sparked massive media attention in early 2025. As generative AI systems increasingly function as both commercial technologies and objects of geopolitical contestation, journalistic coverage plays a key role in shaping how such systems are publicly understood, negotiated, and contested. This study addresses an empirical gap by critically analyzing media coverage of DeepSeek through a qualitative, comparative lens.

Empirically, the study analyses two months of news coverage—from 20 January 2025. where the Deepseek chatbot was launched, to 19 March 2025—published in *The New York Times* (US, n = 177), *The Guardian* (UK, n = 74), the BBC (UK, n = 36), and *The People's Daily* (China, n = 1,161). Full samples were included from the UK and US while a randomized sample of 10% was selected from *The People's Daily* to have comparable sample sizes. The resulting corpus of 403 articles (US: 177; UK: 110; China: 116) was analyzed through three rounds of qualitative coding: first, overarching themes were established inductively; second, quotes from across the material were grouped under the established themes, and third, conflicting discursive articulations were identified and analyzed through the theoretical vocabulary of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Guided by an overarching research question of how major news outlets in the US, UK, and China report on the launch of the DeepSeek chatbot and how it is discursively articulated, the study finds three overarching and conflicting discourses in news coverage across the US, UK, and China. First, DeepSeek is articulated as a *product* by a company, offering new opportunities to consumers, while bringing fierce new competition to financial markets, potentially threatening the market dominance of US firms such as Meta, Alphabet, and OpenAI. Second, DeepSeek is articulated as a *political Instrument* of a nation state, i.e. China, challenging established geo-political relations and stability. In the US and UK, DeepSeek is often articulated through direct Cold War parallels, for example as representing a so-called 'Sputnik moment' (i.e. comparable to the arms race between the US and the Soviet Union). Third, and finally, DeepSeek is articulated as a t*echnological force* with agency of its own, i.e. a transformative socio-technical agent that, through techno-determinist rhetoric, is portrayed as having the ability to drastically transform societies with little possibility of interference or oversight.

The article argues that these concurrent discursive constructions are not merely descriptive but perform important ideological work. By alternately commodifying, securitizing, and naturalizing DeepSeek, news media contribute to shaping the horizons of legitimate debate about AI governance, geopolitical competition, and democratic oversight. In doing so, they articulate generative AI not only as an emergent technology, but as a central object of contemporary geopolitical struggle.

JOS22 Journalistic Content II.

PP 0605 Journalism between West – and another West: Finnish news media's coverage of the exception law on the Eastern border

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In autumn 2023, approximately 1,300 asylum seekers crossed Finland's eastern border. In the Finnish media it was quickly reported as a hybrid operation by Russia, testing Finland's security policy and to evoking uncertainty. Following a quick political debate, the Eastern border crossing points between Finland and Russia were temporarily closed. In spring 2024, after a longer political debate, the Finnish Parliament approved the Border Security Act as an exception law, which entered into force in July 2024.

Our paper examines the media debate surrounding the Border Security Act in Finnish daily news outlets and in the political press. Our analysis offers an example of how the current rapidly changing – and unpredictable – international security environment provokes public discussions where democratic societies are faced with a moment where they negotiate between their commitment to fundamental democratic values (human rights, international commitments) and the pressing, immediate concerns of national security. Our study offers an empirical analysis of the performance of journalism caught up in this dilemma.

Our data consists of 450 news articles, covering a wide range of political affiliations. Empirically we focus on how these position Finland simultaneously geopolitically (to the concrete, geographical West) and ideologically (to the democratic, universalised value community of the West). More concretely we ask: 1) How is Finland's position within the Western community constructed in news coverage of the Border Security Act? 2) What forms of epistemic governance do news media employ when shaping perceptions of Finland's Western identity?

Our findings reveal two discourses, both anchored to the institutional routines of news journalism: a security-political discourse and a rule-of-law discourse. Through appeals to different epistemic authorities, these discourses construct Finland as part of the West—either as a member of an increasingly consolidated Western security community or as part of a reference group of liberal-democratic Western democracies. These notions of "the West" differ both geographically and in terms of their core values.

In the first discourse, which emphasizes national security and defends the exceptional law, Finland is constructed as the outpost of the West. In the second discourse, which takes a critical stance toward the exception law, Finland's national identity and image are constructed as part of the Western democratic community—as a rule-of-law state that adheres to international agreements. The discourses and their designated epistemic authorities reflect not only divisions within the domestic political landscape but also the emergence of new alignments at the international level—within Europe and beyond. In the negotiation between national security and the rule of law, the news media continues to hold the power in framing the debate. However, by positioning the security discourse as hegemonic, the media highlight the role of the security elites as epistemic authority.

JOS23 Journalists II.

PP 0693 Conceptualizing and demarcating professional journalism: a systematic scoping review

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Over the past decades, journalism has faced large transformations due to technological changes, the role of citizens in the media landscape, and the decline of established media organizations. These challenges have fueled the debate over the boundaries of journalism (Deuze & Witschge, 2020). At the same time, a substantial body of research has examined journalism as a profession, contributing to the delineation of its boundaries. Scholars have explored key concepts such as professional journalism, journalistic identity, ideology, roles, norms, and values (Deuze 2005; Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017).

Nevertheless, critical questions remain regarding the extent to which the profession is capable of maintaining its boundaries in the current changing media landscape (Carlson & Lewis, 2015). Especially in an era in which journalism encounters pressure from politicians, the public, and big tech, it is crucial to understand the core of journalism and its boundaries. Only then can journalism define its role in a changing society.

Addressing this issue requires a deeper understanding of the underlying threads influencing the profession, and how core concepts associated with journalistic professionalism, such as identity, ideology, roles, norms, values, are interconnected. Existing studies have often examined these in isolation.

To obtain these insights, we conducted a systematic literature review (scoping review) in journalism and media studies, focusing on academic literature that conceptualizes the profession of journalism in the past three decades. Our initial selection comprised 1455 papers, which we narrowed down to 234 using a strict protocol.

Our scoping review revealed that in journalism and media studies, the focus is often more on journalism as a collective entity: at the institutional or organizational level. Little attention is paid to the journalist as an individual. The synthesis of our scoping review shows that the boundaries of journalism are influenced by five different factors, at a collective and individual level, and within and outside the profession. The first factor relates to how external developments (economic, societal, and technological dynamics) alter the perceptions of journalism as a collective. The second factor pertains to the internal debate that influences the perspectives of journalism as a collective. Regarding the third factor, external developments also directly influence the individual. In the fourth factor, the internal debate within journalism influences the journalist as an individual. In the fifth factor, personal norms, values, and beliefs influence the views of the individual.

With this scoping review, we took a first step toward describing the influences and disentangling the core concepts of professional journalism. We conclude with a research agenda to further study this subject empirically.

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JOS23 Journalists II.

PP 0694 Epistemic profiles: Tech journalists vs tech communicators

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Public understanding of technology becomes increasingly critical in modern knowledge societies, increasing audience dependence on proficient news-reporting. Reporting technology must cope with rapid innovations and complexities of translating technical issues for mass lay audiences. While previously this was mainly the domain of tech journalists, professional communicators with formal technological backgrounds take growing part in technology coverage. Still, both epistemic profiles remain notably under-explored.

This study explores expertise among both epistemic communities using the novel method News-Sorting. Currently, 21 interviews – 17 journalists and 4 communicators – were conducted. The target sample will include 20 journalists and 10 communicators, covering roughly 25% of journalists' and 50% of communicators' populations. Interviewees were asked to rank a sample of their recent publications (N = 25) according to their complexity levels while reflecting on their ranking. To ensure elicitation of the most advanced manifestations of expertise, study covers highly experienced and proficient reporters and communicators (according to field-experts), in spirit of expertise research.

Preliminary findings

While both tech reporters and communicators use generic journalistic practices, e.g., reliance on expert sources, they routinely use some unique practices and perceptions, that characterize the technology "microculture" (Ericson et al., 1989), elaborated in the following themes:

Dual epistemic stance

Tech reporters establish professional authority through subtle forms of self-aggrandizement by disdaining competitors' work. This tendency may reflect internalization of the competitive high-tech industry mindset, emphasizing self-efficacy and authoritativeness (Tassabehji et al., 2024). Conversely, reporters tend to downgrade their own knowledge compared to expert-sources, possibly to cultivate privileged relationships with insider tech-company sources. Communicators, however, highlight their advantages compared to expert-sources, yet express epistemic humility toward journalistic writing skills, ranking presentation of information as more challenging than understanding the information itself. Yet, communicators insist this epistemic gap tends to shrink throughout the years.

Experiential and sensory knowledge

Some reporters acquire experiential knowledge by actively tinkering with tangible objects (products, applications, etc.), thereby developing physical sensory experiences. They actively apply practices of domain specialists to validate the quality and functionality of technological objects reviewed. This knowledge is quite rare in journalism since journalists are considered "interactional-experts", while physical sensory knowledge characterizes "contributory-experts" (Collins & Evans, 2007). Still, communicators are enriched with technological tools unused by journalists. One unusual example involved a communicator who self-learned to develop a designated script for finding patterns within a database of thousands of documents received from a source.

Analytic capacity

(This specific theme was so far limited to reporters) Most reporters show surprisingly sophisticated proactive and analytical expertise, based on their pattern recognition capacities. For example, a reporter experienced in wartime financial investments anticipated a shift from immediate security-technology to a future fintech boom, by comparing historical wartime investments and considering the decline of financial reservoirs during the October 7th war.

Discussion

Findings not only contrast prevailing critique dismissing tech journalists as gullibly relying on press releases (Chyi & Lee, 2017) but also highlight sophisticated expertise-types rarely attributed to journalists, challenging the dichotomous division between interactional and contributive expertise, which may stay insufficient to halt the rising phenomenon of tech communicators.

JOS23 Journalists II.

PP 0695 Effective communication for peace - Collaboration between research and practice

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In view of challenges like digitalization or the reporting about wars and conflicts, media organisations are increasingly seeking advice and evidence-based knowledge from communication scholars (Meier 2020, 7). After all, research findings

only become effective when they are applied to real problems (Wunderlich et al. 2025, 1695), while practical experience provides feedback and new questions that make research more relevant, precise and innovative (Grubenmann 2016; Hanisch & Ollrog 2025, 55).

This paper evaluates the reciprocal relationship between academics and their research output and practice within the framework of an international research project in countries characterized by conflicts. Based on the approach of Meier and Schützeneder (2019), researchers and practice partners have collaborated over several years as 'participating cooperation partners' (Schützeneder et al. 2022, 125) to develop a theoretically based and innovative concept for journalism that is conflict-sensitive, de-escalating and meant to support peacebuilding.

Building on this framework, we address the following research questions: To what extent can such projects effectively benefit from academic expertise, and which factors facilitate – or impede – the transfer of theory into practice?

The collaboration between academia and practice was examined empirically in our project in a multi-stage and mixed-method process: (1) First, regular meeting protocols were analysed using qualitative secondary analysis to identify different phases and fundamental challenges of the cooperation. (2) Based on this, twelve practice partners and eight scholars were interviewed and analysed qualitatively using a semi-guided questionnaire (Bryman 2016).

The analysis showed that practitioners perceived cooperation with the academics as making an important contribution to the research project. The contributions consisted primarily of personal conversations and discussions, the preparation of thematically relevant scientific papers and presentations of the scholars' current work and key research findings. But that the cooperation also presented several challenges. In addition to organisational issues, differences in working methods and communication problems between the practice and the academic teams became particularly apparent. As a result, procedures had to be repeatedly adapted and optimised during the course of the project, for example by adapting the type and frequency of the cooperation. In order to support comparable future projects and mitigate potential problems at an early stage, we propose a theory-based and improved working strategy regarding the facilitate and impede factors we have identified, for example in various areas of organisational, content-related and communicational aspects. These are intended to improve cooperation between academic and journalistic teams in the field, thereby creating improved conditions for a successful transfer of theory into practice.

JOS23 Journalists II.

PP 0696 From bias claims to death threats: Understanding journalists' norm perceptions and responses to online attacks

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Online attacks, by the public or political elites, towards journalists are increasingly common. While some criticism is a legitimate and healthy element of public debate, the nature of media criticism has taken on a more worrisome tone. Journalists are increasingly faced with insults, sexism, and threats, particularly in the online environment. Social media offers citizens unprecedented opportunities to directly target journalists with little consequences. These attacks are found to have far-reaching implications for journalists, including feelings of fear, self-censorship, and ultimately (considerations of) leaving the profession. At the same time, considering the routine nature of attacks, it is argued that journalists learn to tolerate and accept them. Some scholars even argue that attacks have become a 'normal' aspect of the profession. Yet, this notion of normalization remains under-theorized: for whom, and which forms of online attacks are considered normal is not well understood. This paper addresses this gap by examining journalists' injunctive and descriptive norms towards online attacks, that is their evaluation of the appropriateness and perceived prevalence of different forms of online attacks. Understanding these norms is essential because they may shape how journalists respond to online aggression: perceptions of inappropriateness may lead journalists to counteract attacks whereas perceptions of prevalence may cause journalists to ignore them. We therefore also investigate how norm perceptions translate into behavior. We pose the following research questions:

RQ: *(1) How do journalists perceive the appropriateness and prevalence of online attacks, and (2) how do these perceptions explain how they respond to them?*

To investigate these questions, we conducted an experiment with Dutch journalists (N = 171). We presented journalists with a critical statement coming from a social media account targeting a journalist (both actors were anonymized). We manipulated the content of the message, either containing a mild form of criticism, harsh criticism, a personal insult, sexism, or threat. We explore whether journalists' norms differ depending on the type of online attacks, as well as their background characteristics, including gender, the themes they are working on, and political leaning. We expect to find that female and left-wing journalists perceive attacks as more common than their counterparts yet consider them to be less appropriate. We also anticipate that political journalists, and those working on polarized themes will perceive attacks as more normal (more frequent and appropriate). Furthermore, we investigate how journalists' norms influence how they respond to the attacks (i.e., do they engage, ignore, or report it?). We hypothesize that perceptions of prevalence cause journalists to ignore attacks, whereas perceptions of inappropriateness lead them to counteract them. Together, these

finding will provide crucial insights into the normalization of online attacks and how journalists respond to them. In the coming months, we will pre-register and analyze the data and we will be able to present the results during the conference in Brno.

JOS23 Journalists II.

PP 0697 From handshakes to protocols: The changing relationship between journalists and tech companies

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The proliferation of generative AI products represents a fundamental shift in the relationship between journalism and tech companies. While previously, tech companies sought to control the means for distributing journalistic content via search engines or social media platforms, they now increasingly summarize this content and incentivise users to remain within their product interfaces. This threatens to further erode the relevance and autonomy of professional journalism (Simon, 2022).

The success of generative AI products was made possible in part because tech companies exploit technical standards designed around a "handshake agreement": website owners allow crawlers to collect their data in exchange for visibility in search engines (Schellekens 2013). However, the robots.txt protocol – the technical manifestation of this agreement – puts a significant burden on website owners and is inadequate for managing AI crawlers, resulting in what Longpre et al. (2024) call a crisis of consent regarding web data accessibility. News publishers have proactively been trying to push back against this (Fletcher 2024), but given the imbalances inherent in robots.txt journalistic autonomy might continue to suffer (Voinea 2025).

In response, several new technical standards have been proposed or are being developed to manifest new social contracts for governing AI crawlers. Possibly the most consequential initiative to come up with this standard is the "AI Preferences" working group of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), one of the most important standards organizations for internet technology (https://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/aipref/about). The working group develops a "vocabulary" that should provide content creators more fine-grained and machine-readable ways to express how their content can be used for AI products.

This paper draws on interdisciplinary perspectives to argue that journalism studies must look beyond the direct usage of AI tools to study how the infrastructural conditions of newsmaking are being rewritten. We further conduct an in-depth thematic analysis of the IETF working group's draft proposals and related public mailing list discussions, which bring together representatives from AI companies, news publishers, policy makers, and NGOs. Our goal is to analyze how changes introduced in the draft proposals reveal major conflicts between the participating parties, and what these changes mean for journalism.

Our study finds that most conflicts revolve around the question of where to draw the line between "search" and "summary." News publishers and other content creators want to establish a clear distinction between traditional search engines and generative AI products, while tech companies seek to blur the difference. The results are attempts to define "search" not as a product category (as in "traditional search engine") but as a question of output formats. But this leaves the question, to what extent is the output directing users to the original source? We conclude that the outcome of these negotiations (between "search" and "summary") will impact the future economic model of journalism, but also more fundamentally, the extent to which journalism remains the primary gatekeeper of publicly relevant information.

JOS24 AI, Platforms and Journalism

PP 0698 Inside the algorithmic newsroom professional perspectives on artificial intelligence

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly reshaping journalism not only at the level of newsroom routines, but also in terms of professional authority, ethical responsibility, and epistemic control. While much of the debate has emphasized efficiency, automation, and innovation, less attention has been paid to how AI reconfigures journalists' sense of agency and their capacity to account for editorial decisions. This paper presents a synthesized contribution from a doctoral research project, that examines how AI influences journalism and journalists' professional perspectives in contemporary digital news environments.

The study adopts a mixed-methods research design aimed at capturing both the discursive construction of artificial intelligence in journalism and its lived professional implications. It combines a longitudinal content analysis of 8,003 news articles published between 2020 and 2024 in leading media outlets in Spain and Peru, used as an analytical contrast between distinct media-system configurations. The content analysis maps structural patterns in AI-related coverage, including thematic

trends, editorial positioning, and dominant frames over time. This quantitative mapping is complemented by a qualitative interpretive analysis of frames, metaphors, and narrative modes through which AI is represented in journalistic discourse.

In order to contextualize these findings, the study incorporates 42 semi-structured interviews with journalists, editors, and newsroom professionals. Rather than constituting a separate empirical block, the interviews function as an interpretive layer that bridges media discourse and professional practice, enabling a systematic examination of how AI is understood, negotiated, and contested in everyday newsroom decision-making. The qualitative findings reveal a persistent pattern of professional ambivalence: while participants recognize the instrumental value of AI for automating routine tasks and enhancing data-processing capacities, they also express concerns regarding algorithmic opacity, the erosion of editorial autonomy, deskilling processes, and the dilution of responsibility.

Overall, the study identifies a structural gap between media discourses that frame AI-driven innovation as inevitable or inherently progressive and journalists' professional realities, which are marked by uncertainty, negotiation, and ethical tension. By conceptualizing professional ambivalence as a structural feature of algorithmically mediated newsrooms, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on journalistic authority, ethical accountability, and professional agency in digital journalism. By foregrounding professional perspectives while embedding them in media discourse analysis, the paper conceptualizes artificial intelligence as a site of ongoing professional negotiation rather than as a neutral technological advancement. It argues that the impact of AI on journalism is shaped less by the technology itself than by organizational cultures and institutional arrangements, where questions of agency, accountability, and professional authority are actively contested and redefined.

JOS24 AI, Platforms and Journalism

PP 0699 How news finds you on TikTok: Tracing algorithmic exposure and engagement via user data donations

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The impact of the TikTok recommender system on democratic discourse remains a critical research gap. While its technical architecture is well known (Liu et al., 2022), the social consequences of how individuals encounter news and political information remain unclear. Additionally, young audiences increasingly acknowledge alternative information sources beyond professional journalism while still applying journalistic normative standards (e.g., Anter & Kümpel, 2023). The necessity of broadening the concept of news in empirical research has been demonstrated in empirical work has been demonstrated using browser trace data on news and political information (e.g., Loecherbach et al., 2024). However, for social media platforms, and TikTok specifically, we have yet to understand how much, and in what forms of interaction and consumption, TikTok users encounter journalistic and non-journalistic information. We pose two research questions:

RQ1: What are the typical exposure and engagement patterns of information from conventional and unconventional news sources that appear in user TikTok feeds?

RQ2: Are those patterns significantly different between conventional and unconventional news sources?

We employ a multi-method approach using a dataset of 49 TikTok Data Download Packages (DDPs) donated by German participants and linked to survey data. The DDPs contained 1,992,622 references to unique videos, of which the necessary meta- and content data for classification were available for 1,677,759 (84,2%) of the videos. Our analysis differentiates between *exposure patterns* (the trace of suggested videos) and *engagement patterns* (active engagement measures including watch time, likes, and shares).

Content classification is conducted via automated multimodal analysis using a Large Language Model (e.g., Qwen3-VL). Preliminary tests show high reliability (ICR > 0.75) against a human-coded dataset (n = 100). Professional journalistic accounts are identified via the *database for public speakers (DBÖS)* via username matching. Finally, we adapt process mining to the event logs (i.e. DDPs) to explore the "trace dynamics" of informative content—identifying how different user groups (segmented by age, gender, and political leaning) encounter and engage with journalistic vs. non-journalistic information.

This work-in-progress contributed to a better understanding of information dynamics on TikTok, specifically the exposure and engagement patterns of users with news and knowledge content from journalistic and non-journalistic sources.

Data collection has been completed, and the first pretests for the automated content analysis have been conducted. Results will be available by early summer, primarily constrained by the processing time for automated content classification of 1,677,759 videos.

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JOS24 AI, Platforms and Journalism

PP 0700 The relevance of human factor and transparency: Perceptions of artificial intelligence and information credibility in news production. Results from an online survey in Spain

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One of the critical shifting grounds in journalism studies, regarding the theme of ECREA 2026, is the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) in news production and the audience perceptions of those changes. To promote transparency and accountability in the media, it is essential to study the beliefs of the public concerning how AI tools are implemented in content production processes, especially in countries like Spain, marked by a low level of trust in the media brands. In a context where a growing part of the population is integrating these technologies into their daily lives, the objective of this research is to analyse the perception of spanish audiences regarding AI in journalism in four main aspects: knowledge, scope, application preferences and degree of comfort and credibility. An online survey of 16 questions was conducted by Yougov to a representative sample of 2,004 residents in Spain in April 2025, considering variables such as the familiarity with AI, the level of agreement about its objectivity, the different uses in news production or the degree of credibility given to information verified by AI (versus a journalist). Among the main results, almost half of the Spanish population considers themselves to be unfamiliar or very unfamiliar with AI (46%), although 77% are aware that they interact with it on a daily basis. On the other hand, a significant proportion endorse the integration of AI in newsrooms, mainly as a support tool for journalists (in tasks as translations or text improvements). Furthermore, the human factor is a key component in news consumption: the credibility of a news item verified by a journalist (56%) is almost double that of one verified by AI (30%). Finally, 80% of respondents demand transparency from the media regarding the use of AI. Significant relations are observed between these perceptions of AI and educational level, gender, income and age. As previous research concludes, audience attitudes towards the role of AI in journalism emphasise the human component of the journalist in the creation, supervision and verification of news.

JOS24 AI, Platforms and Journalism

PP 0701 Artificial intelligence in European fact-checking: Shifting journalistic routines and hybrid practices

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Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) are reshaping the foundations of journalistic practices, particularly fact-checking, contributing to shifting professional routines, roles and boundaries. Over recent years, fact-checking has gained prominence as a distinct journalistic activity in response to information overload and the rapid spread of misinformation. Within this context, verification initiatives have been increasingly pressured to respond more efficiently, opening the way for the adoption of automated technologies.

This study examines how four European fact-checking projects — Polígrafo (Portugal), Maldita.es (Spain), Vrai ou Faux from FranceInfo (France), and Facta (Italy) — are incorporating, or choosing not to incorporate, AI into their work processes, and the implications this has for journalistic routines and professional practices. The research adopts a mixed method, with a qualitative approach based on 13 semi-structured interviews with professionals from these organisations and a quantitative approach with the analysis of 1711 fact-checks published during the a period of alternate weeks between may and october 2024.

The present research aims to identify the stages of the verification process in which AI technologies are employed, to understand their impact on the organisation of work, and to assess whether automated systems are perceived as potential substitutes for human professionals. The central question is whether fact-checkers can be replaced by AI. If not, how is AI transforming the work of these professionals?

The findings reveal distinct paths of technological adoption shaped not only by technical affordances but also by journalistic values, organisational models and professional cultures. Polígrafo uses AI during the fact-checking phase, utilising specific online tools. Maldita, on the other hand, integrates AI into various verification stages, including the initial content screening (collection phase), cross-referencing data with previous databases (fact-checking phase) and generating standard responses via a chatbot to interact with the audience (distribution phase). These solutions accelerate processes and structure a more efficient, data-driven routine. FranceInfo's Vrai ou Faux section takes a more artisanal approach, considering human judgement irreplaceable at all stages of verification. Here, AI is present sporadically in the form of ChatGPT, which supports small tasks. Finally, in contrast, Facta is the only agency to reveal that it does not use any AI tools.

Rather than pointing towards a uniform trajectory of technological replacement, the results highlight hybrid configurations in which human expertise and automated systems are interconnected and complementary, each performing distinct

functions within the verification process. By focusing on fact-checking as a key journalistic practice, this study contributes to broader debates on the future of journalism in the AI era, showing how shifting technological grounds are redefining professional skills, ethical boundaries and editorial accountability.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence; Fact-Checking; Journalistic routines

JOS24 AI, Platforms and Journalism

PP 0702 Tracing sociotechnical imaginaries of digital journalism, 1995–2025

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This paper explores the discursive construction of sociotechnical imaginaries about journalism and technology from the mid-1990s onwards. Defined by Jasanoff (2015: 4) as "collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures," we scrutinize the pivotal role these discourses and the imaginaries they convey have played in shaping and restricting which futures of journalism journalistic actors envision, adopt, and resist. This paper intervenes with a much-needed critical-historical perspective on the socio-political dynamics of discourses about new technologies and journalistic innovation that challenges the idea that digital innovation is inherently good, naturally technology-driven, and that its direction is inevitable and unavoidable (Godin, 2015). We argue instead that technological innovation for journalism has been socially constructed as a panacea within future-oriented discourses (Harbers, 2024).

To do so, we unpack the concept of the sociotechnical imaginary in terms of both its explanatory power and its heuristic use. Exploring the performative nature of sociotechnical imaginaries and the way competing imaginaries are strategically exploited by actors with diverging interests (ranging from 'techbros' and politicians to publishers and journalists). We focus on the discursive interaction between the future-oriented nature of such imaginaries and the way they offer a strategic reinterpretation of past developments within journalism to convince and naturalize their "diagnosis that points to the need for a fundamental change in the shape of pressure to innovate" (Hepp and Loosen, 2022: 118).

This is then followed by a comparative analysis of defining critical discourse moments since the 1990s (e.g., the emergence of the early web; web 2.0 and social media; smartphones and digital platforms; and (Gen)AI) in the Netherlands and Norway. Our corpus consists of a wide selection of public debates on journalistic innovation and journalism's future within national newspapers and magazines as well as specific trade journals and industry websites, such as Villamedia, the Dutch Journalism Fund, Fritt Ord and journalisten.no. This Northern-European focus addresses the emergence of these imaginaries within democratic-corporatist media systems, where the tension between commercial drivers and public service conceptions of journalism further entangle the relationships between news media and technology.

From our analysis, we illustrate how imaginative discursive work (i.e., the formulation of sociotechnical imaginaries in news texts) has had material and practical implications for the historical development of newspapers in the digital age. Our study further informs specific debates about technological innovations, analyzing the legitimization of their adoption in light of journalism's imagined future. From a critical historical perspective, by challenging the self-evidence with which the need and benefit of journalistic innovation is presented, we can show the role innovation discourses play in actively shaping journalism's future. Highlighting this, we aim to better inform the emergence of a more inclusive, democratic and pluriform debate about the nature of journalistic innovation, digital technologies, and the future of journalism.

JOS25 Alternative Media

PP 0712 Socio-demographic and professional backgrounds of alternative media authors in Germany

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Research on alternative media has seen a strong revival, driven by the emergence of various new outlets in many countries that position themselves against the dominant mainstream media. While a lot of studies have examined the content and audiences of these outlets, little is known about the producers of contemporary alternative media outlets. Traditionally, alternative media have valued diversity and participation, fostering open structures that should enable amateurs with various backgrounds to engage in the process of news production. However, it is questionable how much these ideals remain today. Some prominent alternative media authors have worked or still work for mainstream media. This may be indicative of a general trend resulting from two significant developments in the alternative media landscape. First, the label 'alternative media' has been appropriated by right-wing outlets. Though these outlets also claim to provide a corrective to the mainstream media, their perspectives and editorial principles can be expected to differ from those of original alternative outlets commonly associated with leftist social movements. Second, the alternative media landscape is marked by a convergence with the mainstream that is also observable in more traditional alternative outlets (Kenix 2011). Consequently, they may rely more on professional journalists rather than involving marginalized groups that are excluded from the news media. This

study therefore asks what backgrounds the authors of alternative media have today, and how these differ from mainstream news, focussing on the particular context of Germany.

The study is based on a systematic analysis of the backgrounds of the authors from the two most popular alternative outlets of the political right (Nius, Tichys Einblick) and left (NachDenkSeiten, Jacobin). Background information is collected for all authors who wrote at least three articles in 2025 (n = 232) using public data sources (e.g., LinkedIn), and analyzed with a coding scheme. We examine the size, gender ratio, and mean age of the author pools. Additionally, we investigate in which professional sectors and for which specific employers the authors have worked before or still work. To date, the data collection is 90% finished.

Preliminary results show that men are overrepresented across all outlets to a greater extent than in mainstream media. With respect to age, there are differences within both ideological camps, suggesting that the outlets target different audiences. Analyses of the authors' professional backgrounds show that many have written for mainstream media. This is particularly true for authors from right-wing outlets, many of whom have worked for conservative mainstream media, though only a minority continues to do so. Furthermore, the data reveal that many authors also write for other alternative media, a practice that is more prevalent among left-wing outlets. Apart from that, left-wing outlets have more politicians and scholars among their authors, while right-wing outlets have a higher share of authors from the business sector. Overall, the findings suggest that popular German alternative media on both sides of the ideological spectrum have highly professional content producers. However, alternative media appear to differ from mainstream media in the more prominent role of partisan pundits.

JOS25 Alternative Media

PP 0713 Political alternative media in Germany: Prevalence, segmentation, and democratic distance (2021–2025)

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In June 2024, Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior banned the media company behind *Compact* magazine, citing the dissemination of racist, conspiracy-driven, and anti-democratic content. Although the Federal Administrative Court later overturned the ban on procedural grounds, the case highlights the continuing relevance of political alternative media in democratic public spheres. Despite comparatively small audiences, such outlets can shape public discourse, mobilize supporters, and undermine trust in democratic institutions, particularly through scandalization, emotionalization, and narratives of censorship.

Political alternative media have long been linked to radical mobilization. In digital environments, antagonistic outlets - especially on the far right - have proliferated and professionalized, often mimicking journalistic formats while being guided primarily by political rather than journalistic norms. They position themselves as correctives to a perceived "mainstream" and promote ideologically framed interpretations of current events. Yet there is a lack of longitudinal population-based research examining how political alternative media use develops over time and how it relates to multidimensional political attitudes linked to radicalism and extremism.

Based on previous research, this paper asks broadly: *How prevalent is political alternative media use in Germany between 2021 and 2025, how has it changed over time, and to what extent is it associated with ideological segmentation, right-wing extremism affinity, and anti-democratic attitudes?*

The analysis draws on five waves (2021–2025) of the *MiD* survey, a repeated cross-sectional study representative of the German population. Political alternative media use was measured via self-reported frequency (1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*) of using five outlets categorized as far-right (Compact, Junge Freiheit, Tichys Einblick) or far-left (Junge Welt, Jungle World) (e.g., Kristensen et al., 2023). Based on their consumption patterns, respondents were classified as exclusive far-right users, exclusive far-left users, or cross-cutting users. We analyze prevalence, intensity, exclusivity, and ideological overlap over time, and link usage patterns to multidimensional measures of right-wing extremism affinity and anti-democraticy attitudes (full scales and measures explained in the methods report as developed by Farren et al., 2025).

Results show that political alternative media use remains a minority phenomenon. From 2021 to 2025, an average of 6.2% of respondents reported at least occasional use, while fewer than 2% reported frequent use; overall levels were largely stable. Far-right alternative media dominated the landscape throughout, both in absolute terms and within the group of alternative media users.

At the same time, usage became increasingly ideologically segmented. Across both ideological camps, the share of exclusive users-consuming outlets from only one ideological spectrum-increased over time. Far-right alternative media were most frequently used in isolation, indicating increasingly closed and homogeneous usage patterns, while cross-ideological use occurred only among small and volatile groups.

Finally, alternative media use is strongly associated with radical and anti-democratic attitudes, particularly among exclusive users. Among far-right users, right-wing stances and anti-democratic attitudes increased substantially over time. Overall, the findings suggest that political alternative media in Germany are not expanding broadly but consolidating within closed

ideological segments, reinforcing anti-democratic attitudes and making them structurally relevant actors in radicalization-prone information ecosystems despite their limited reach.

JOS25 Alternative Media

PP 0714 Stability on shifting grounds: Funding rhetorics and resilience in Portuguese alternative media

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Journalism faces a global structural crisis as market-driven models collapse under digital disruption and democratic backsliding (Pickard, 2019; UNESCO, 2022). In Southern Europe, this crisis is amplified by systemic fragilities: low subscription rates, late digital adoption, and weak institutional support (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Papathanassopoulos & Miconi, 2023). Portugal exemplifies these vulnerabilities, where independent outlets operate in a "structural void" without robust state or philanthropic safety nets. Against this backdrop, alternative media become critical laboratories for experimenting with funding models that reconcile autonomy with survival.

This exploratory study investigates how Portuguese alternative outlets articulate resilience through funding rhetorics, using the Actor-Structure dialectic (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010) as a theoretical lens. Alternative media are not "pure" entities; they exist in constant negotiation between structural constraints (legal status, financial precarity) and actor-driven ideals of independence and dissent (Atton, 2002; Downing, 2001; Fuchs, 2010). Funding models emerge as the primary site where these tensions materialize, shaping organizational strategies and audience relationships.

The study adopts a qualitative methodology, employing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021) to examine media self-discourse on financial sustainability. Case selection draws on Ganito & Ferreira's (2024) mapping of the Portuguese alternative media landscape, which identified Fumaça, Divergente, and Gerador as emblematic of distinct sustainability logics: militant independence, professional rigor, and cultural hybridity. Data were analyzed across four dimensions to capture how funding rhetorics mediate the Actor-Structure tension: Foundations (ownership, revenue mix, transparency), Narratives (mission, antagonism), Relations (audience naming, calls-to-action), and Aesthetics (interface design, tone).

Preliminary findings indicate three rhetorical logics: Fumaça frames grants as a temporary "necessary evil" en route to full community funding, mobilizing audiences as co-strugglers; Divergente emphasizes methodological transparency and professional rigor, positioning supporters as enlightened patrons sustaining investigative depth against market failure (Teixeira & Jorge, 2021); Gerador adopts a hybrid model, blending journalism with cultural and educational products, constructing audiences as cultural citizens who gain lifestyle benefits (Cagé, 2016). These strategies reveal funding as an ethical and performative practice, redefining sustainability under structural voids.

By situating Portugal within the Polarized Pluralist Media System (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), this study contributes to comparative debates on media resilience in Southern Europe and informs policy frameworks that treat journalism as a public good. Ultimately, it argues that funding rhetorics function as adaptive strategies on shifting grounds, offering insights into how alternative media innovate at the intersection of ethics, economics, and audience engagement to envision inclusive futures.

JOS25 Alternative Media

PP 0715 Who qualifies as a journalistic media outlet? Insights from the EMFA and the media sector

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The media ecosystem has undergone profound transformations over recent decades. The reconfiguration of the communicative environment has coincided with the steady rise of media intermediaries, such as search engines and social networks, which have fundamentally reshaped the media landscape and generated new tensions among actors, particularly between news organisations and digital platforms.

Within this evolving context, research points to a more diverse media environment, albeit one characterised by lower levels of public trust than traditional news offerings. Distrust is especially pronounced in media systems with high levels of social media news consumption, alongside a growing tendency toward intentional news avoidance. These dynamics underscore the challenges faced by professional journalism in sustaining audience engagement and institutional legitimacy amid an abundance of competing information sources.

Simultaneously, the emergence of pseudo-media outlets or interloper media has further complicated journalism's role. These actors appropriate the visual and discursive conventions of established news media while contesting core journalistic norms, often fostering polarisation, provocation, and politically driven narratives presented as public-interest news.

In this scenario, the boundaries of journalism become increasingly blurred, prompting extensive academic debate over what constitutes a journalistic media outlet in the contemporary media ecosystem. This boundary-setting is also intertwined with regulatory initiatives, such as the entry into force of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) in 2025, which defines a media service as an entity that provides "programmes or press publications, under the editorial responsibility of a media service provider, to the general public, by any means, in order to inform, entertain or educate".

Against this backdrop, the present study examines how journalistic media are defined and how boundaries are drawn between them and emerging actors that, positioning themselves as new media, introduce external norms and practices that challenge the profession. Grounded in the EMFA, the analysis incorporates the perspectives of academics, journalists, and representatives of professional media associations as key stakeholders in the sector. Three research questions guide the study: Which variables shape the definition of a journalistic media outlet? What distinguishes a journalistic media outlet from an interloper or pseudo-media actor? Should the definition of a journalistic media outlet be open or closed? Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on a thematic analysis of the EMFA and a focus group with media experts.

Preliminary findings suggest that the EMFA adopts a predominantly economic approach, framing the issue in terms of market failures and outlining actions for regulatory bodies. While focus group participants question this economic framing, they nonetheless converge on the relevance of key normative principles, including journalistic independence, editorial accountability, and transparency. They further argue that professional mediation, including verification, contextualisation, and ethical standards, constitutes the key boundary separating journalistic media from interloper media and other emerging actors, often associated with political or economic intentionality and limited accountability. Finally, participants advocate for an open, adaptable definition of journalistic media that remains responsive to ongoing technological and organisational change while acknowledging its inherently contextual and purpose-driven nature.

JOS25 Alternative Media

PP 0716 Metamorphosis of journalistic practice on YouTube: The Turkish experience

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This study examines the changes in journalistic practice on YouTube within Turkey's authoritarian media environment, where traditional journalism has been structurally captured through political, economic, and regulatory pressures. As mainstream media outlets have lost autonomy and credibility, a growing number of professional journalists have migrated to YouTube, using the platform as a primary space for news commentary, political analysis, and public debate. Rather than treating YouTube merely as an alternative distribution channel, this study conceptualizes it as a digital medium that actively reshapes journalistic norms, labor, and professional identity.

The research asks three interrelated questions: How does journalistic practice change when YouTube becomes the primary site of news production and dissemination? How do platform governance, algorithms, and monetization strategies reshape journalistic autonomy and editorial decision-making? To what extent does YouTube journalism offer genuine independence from political control in an authoritarian context or reproduce new forms of constraint?

The study is based on semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between March and July 2024 with 14 prominent Turkish journalists who transitioned from legacy media to YouTube. These journalists had extensive professional backgrounds in television, print, or radio journalism and collectively reach audiences comparable to, or exceeding, those of mainstream news organizations. The interviews were thematically analyzed to capture changes in journalistic roles and perception of the occupation, content production routines, audience relations, and strategies of self-branding, as well as structural constraints, censorship, and self-censorship.

The findings show that YouTube enables journalists to bypass institutional newsroom hierarchies and editorial censorship, granting greater control over content and direct engagement with audiences. However, this autonomy is conditional. Journalistic labor on YouTube becomes individualized and entrepreneurial, collapsing the division of labor typical of news organizations. Journalists are compelled to adopt self-branding strategies, monitor audience metrics, and tailor content to opaque algorithmic preferences. Algorithmic visibility and monetization pressures influence topic selection, tone, and headline framing, often privileging emotionally charged or controversial content over conventional news values.

We argue that journalist YouTubers in Turkey constitute a "new mainstream" that simultaneously resists state-driven media capture while becoming structurally dependent on platform capitalism. This dual dependency reshapes journalistic practice, shifting it away from institutional watchdog journalism toward hybrid forms of commentary, aggregation, and opinion leadership. These transformations are driven by a reconfiguration of communicative space, journalistic roles, and discursive authority under platform logics. The Turkish case demonstrates that while digital platforms partially loosen journalism's dependence on traditional forms of power, this limited autonomy is offset by new forms of control exercised through algorithmic governance and economic dependency on platforms.

Keywords

Journalist YouTubers, algorithmic governance, self-branding, entrepreneurial journalism, division of labour

JOS26 Audiences and Journalism II.

PP 0800 What audiences do when journalists don't meet their expectations: A study of audience responses and their determinants

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Although research on audience expectations of journalism has expanded substantially over the past decade, less is known about what happens when these expectations are not met. Understanding these consequences, however, is crucial for grasping how people make sense of and engage with journalism. Drawing on Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT; Burgoon & Jones, 1976), early studies have demonstrated that violations of journalistic expectancies lead to negative outcomes, such as decreased news consumption and lower levels of trust (e.g., Fawzi & Mothes, 2020).

However, EVT postulates that violations of expectancies do not necessarily result in negative consequences. Rather, the process is more complex, possibly resulting in expectancy adaptation (Burgoon & Hubbard, 2005). Moreover, audiences may justify such violations depending on contextual factors, such as perceived relational closeness with journalists (Raemy & Vos, 2020) or the availability of attractive alternatives (Cohen, 2010). It is therefore necessary to investigate in greater detail the diverse consequences of expectancy violations in journalism, as well as the factors shaping them.

Against this background, the present study examines: (RQ1) the extent to which audiences intend to modify their expectancies when an important journalistic expectancy is violated; (RQ2) the extent to which audiences justify the violation of an important journalistic expectancy, affecting the likelihood of using, trusting, and liking the journalist who violated it – three core elements of the audience-journalist relationship (Wilhelm et al., 2021); and (RQ3) how audiences' evaluations and news consumption practices influence responses to such violations.

To address these questions, we conducted a representative survey of the Austrian population (N = 1,026) in August 2025, asking respondents to identify one out of 28 possible audience expectancies that they considered most important. The results show that 59% of respondents did not intend to adjust their expectancy following its violation. A similar distribution emerged across the variables measuring intentions to use, trust, and like the journalist who violated it: around 50% reported that they would be less likely to do so, approximately 40% indicated no change, and roughly 10% stated that they would actually be more likely to use, trust, and like the journalist and their work.

Logistic regression analyses reveal that journalists' perceived authenticity (closeness to audiences, transparency, and warmth) positively influences audiences' intentions to maintain or even increase their use of, trust in, and liking of a journalist who violates an expectancy, as well as audiences' willingness to adjust expectancies accordingly. Conversely, perceiving journalists as being free to independently decide how to perform their work has the opposite effect. These findings suggest that perceived benevolent intentions of journalists make audiences more willing to justify expectancy violations. In addition, frequency of news use negatively affects intentions to continue using and trusting a journalist after an expectancy violation, supporting Cohen's (2010) argument that audiences are less willing to justify violations when attractive alternatives are readily available.

Overall, this study adds nuance to research on audience expectancies and the consequences of their violation. It shows that expectancy violations do not produce uniform outcomes, which depend on a range of contexts.

JOS26 Audiences and Journalism II.

PP 0801 What young people want from news vs what journalists provide: introducing the "youth values" concept to bridge industry and audience perspectives

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Public service media are legally required to inform, educate, and connect with a broad audience, including adolescents and young adults. At a time when young people's news habits have shifted toward mostly incidental and indirect use (Reuters Institute, 2025), however, public broadcasters struggle to reach audiences of all ages. This paper proposes the concept of 'youth values', arguing that, rather than nudging young people to appreciate PSM's existing conceptualizations of news, newsrooms should strive to better understand what makes news valuable for informing young audiences and when news becomes relevant in facilitating public connection.

Current scholarship on news values has predominantly approached the question of newsworthiness from an industry perspective but has paid far less attention to what constitutes valuable news to audiences (see Temmerman & Mast, 2021, for an exception). Moreover, existing conceptual and methodological frameworks for studying news values mainly emphasize *content*-related values (i.e., what valuable news is *about*). This neglects other dimensions that shape societal

understandings of 'newsworthy information', including perceptions of *when*, *where*, and how news becomes valuable and *for whom*.

To capture "youth values" beyond industry-defined and content-centered dimensions, we draw on two empirical studies from Norway, a relevant case given the strong position of PSM and their significant investments in news initiatives geared toward young audiences (e.g., NRK Ung; Røsok-Dahl, 2025; Adami, 2024). Combining three months of ethnographic newsroom fieldwork at the national public service broadcaster NRK with multi-method audience studies (recurring interviews, media diaries, and video-ethnography) of how 25 young Norwegians experience news in everyday life, this study reveals tensions and similarities between how news is tailored to young audiences and how news becomes valuable in their lifeworlds.

On this basis, we introduce a multidimensional model for analyzing «youth values» across the levels of *content, technology, form, social context,* and *experience,* contributing to the theorization of news values by integrating views on what is newsworthy from both industry and audience perspectives. We find that newsrooms tend to approach information that is newsworthy to young people mainly from a technology- and goal-focused perspective, prioritizing content that is constructive, platform-adaptive, visually attractive, and 'viral'. In contrast, younger audiences find news valuable when it enables sociability and a sense of belonging (cf. Bengtsson, 2023); when it provides multiple perspectives; when it enables smooth navigation and 'sober' presentations; and when news is experienced as emotionally resonant.

Our analysis of «youth values» thus challenges assumptions that young people constitute a fundamentally different audience from previous generations. While their pathways to news have changed—prompting newsrooms to adapt strategies and distribution—young people's expectations of journalism show notable continuity with those of older generations. A more important discussion lies in how journalism can offer news that resonates with young people's lifeworlds, addresses what they see as issues of common concern, and enables sociability within their everyday communities. The study thus bridges a gap in journalism studies by offering a rare perspective on how «youth values» are negotiated across industry and audience perspectives.

JOS26 Audiences and Journalism II.

PP 0802 Public trust in AI use in fact-checking: Qualitative insights from focus groups with Spanish citizens

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Recent research suggests that the use of AI in fact-checking can have positive effects on citizens' trust and credibility, as AI is often associated with increased objectivity (e.g. Lan et al., 2025; Lee and Liu, 2025). However, this emerging research remains limited and relies largely on quantitative and experimental designs, leaving qualitative perspectives—capable of providing more nuanced and context-sensitive insights—underexplored. To address this gap, the present study adopts a qualitative approach based on four focus groups with Spanish citizens (N = 24). Spain constitutes a particularly relevant case, as it is one of the European countries with the lowest levels of trust in the information ecosystem (Newman et al., 2025) and displays marked distrust in fact-checking organisations (Calvo et al., 2022). This context makes it especially suitable for examining how AI shapes public trust in fact-checking as a journalistic practice. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 years, included men and women, and had diverse educational backgrounds, both with and without university education, to capture a broad range of perspectives. The findings reveal limited public knowledge and generally low trust in the journalistic role of fact-checking organisations. At the same time, participants expressed ambivalent views regarding the use of AI in fact-checking. On the one hand, AI was associated with expectations of greater impartiality; on the other, it raised concerns about the amplification of disinformation and the potential loss of jobs. Regarding specific tasks, activities such as monitoring disinformation and identifying claims were widely perceived as appropriate for delegation to AI. These tasks were often viewed as potentially more rigorous and less cognitively demanding for humans when supported by AI, which was seen as particularly effective for processing large volumes of data. Similarly, the use of AI for translation, transcription, and the dissemination of content was generally trusted, provided that human oversight remained in place. In contrast to attitudes towards journalism more broadly, some participants expressed confidence in fact-checkers writing verifications with the assistance of AI. This position was justified by the expectation that fact-checkers, unlike journalists, are not required to develop a distinctive writing style but should instead present verified information in a clear, neutral, and standardised manner. A smaller number of participants also considered it acceptable for AI to be used to create deliberately false audiovisual content for educational purposes, with the aim of raising awareness about the risks of AI-generated disinformation. Finally, greater trust in AI use for assisted and automated verification was observed among younger participants with university education (aged 18–35). Among other participants, perceptions were more ambivalent, and greater trust was often placed in human fact-checkers, particularly due to their professional training and physical presence. Overall, the findings show that citizens' perceptions of AI use in fact-checking are far from homogeneous and suggest that higher levels of education may be associated with greater trust in AI, rather than with increased scepticism towards its adoption. The findings may also inform future research and guide journalistic and fact-checking organisations in their consideration of AI adoption.

JOS26 Audiences and Journalism II.

PP 0803 Beyond personal preference: The structural drivers of news avoidance in Türkiye – A comparative analysis of traditional and new media audiences

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In a media ecosystem where news consumption habits and practices are rapidly evolving, the "news avoidance" phenomenon has become a critical issue for democratic societies, which rely on the role of media to maintain checks and balances. At a stage where individuals can consume news regardless of time and space, it has also become possible to avoid it. This study aims to examine the Turkish context of news avoidance by comparing traditional and new media users via utilizing a mixed-methods approach comprising 1628 survey responses and 23 semi-structured interviews conducted in Türkiye between late May 2025 and early June 2025. The findings reveal that 10,9% of the participants avoided the news consistently—defined as not consuming any news in the prior week. When including those who avoid the news "sometimes, often, or always" the figure climbs up to 74,7%. Notably, new media users avoid the news more (11,6%) compared to traditional media users (6,6%). While traditional media users perceive following the news as a "civic duty" and show greater interest in the political agenda, new media users tend to trust news organizations less and exhibit a more distant attitude. Furthermore, new media users are more susceptible to the impact of negative content, which is often substituted for alternative digital activities such as gaming and social media usage. The evidence indicates that news avoidance is not only a matter of individual preference but also a consequence of the structural evolution of the media. Since the early 1990s, increasing commercialization, monopolization, and de-unionization have triggered a crisis of representation in journalism. Adding on, the digital era's pressure for speed and reliance on clickbait metrics have caused a sensationalist "event journalism" that eclipses quality "situation journalism." The lack of ethical standards and the homogenization of news content are weakening the bond between news outlets and citizens. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that news avoidance in Türkiye is a result of both the crisis of journalism and the new media, where the news is not the priority. The findings suggest that negative and overlapping news content are weakening the news consumption rate. Although it is hard to debate around a mass disengagement, the rising trend of avoiding the news shows that a fundamental re-evaluating of journalistic standards is necessary.

JOS26 Audiences and Journalism II.

PP 0804 Let's hear the other side: the interplay of populism and anti-populism in Flemish talk shows

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Mainstream news media have become more central in understanding the rise of (right-wing) populism in Europe, as they may provide a fertile climate for populism to thrive (De Jonge 2019; 2021a; 2021b; Manucci, 2017, Mazzoleni, 2008; Krämer, 2018). At the same time, mainstream media are increasinly accused of bias within right-wing anti-media populistic communication (Engesser et al., 2017; Strömbäck & Åkerlund, 2025). Other authors point to the apparent dominance of an anti-populist discourse in mediated public debate (Goyvaerts & De Cleen, 2020; Shchinova et al., 2024).

Empirical studies typically tend to focus on populism, anti-media populism or anti-populism separately, whether in political communication or news discourse (e.g. De Mulder & Paulussen, 2021; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Hameleers & Vliegenthart, 2020). Holistic research into the frequency and patterns of the interplay of populism, anti-media populism and anti-populism in news related content remains limited. Despite its importance for fully understanding the populism-media nexus, as these phenomena don't exist in vacuum but are in constant interaction (cf. Voutyras, 2024). In Europe, populism-media research has predominantly focused on political party broadcasts, social media or established newspaper reporting (e.g. Engesser et al, 2017; Hameleers & Vliegenthart, 2020; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Talk shows remain understudied, especially in Flanders. Yet talk shows are particularly relevant due to their live format, the journalist-politician interaction and limited editorial control, which might make them especially suitable for populist communication (Blassnig et al., 2025; Bos & Brants, 2014; Ernst et al., 2019). This leads to the research question: **How do populism and anti-populism manifest in Flemish talk shows?**

Flanders, the Dutch-speaking northern region of Belgium, has known early breakthrough of radical-right wing populist parties. Over time, increasing media attention and accommodation, likely facilitated their growth (De Jonge, 2021a; 2021b; Schafraad et al., 2012). Flanders does not enforce a strict *cordon médiatique*, allowing journalists for varied strategies in dealing with populist actors and themes (De Jonge, 2021b; De Jonge & Gaufman, 2022). This makes it a compelling case for analysis. Some strategies, like confrontation, may inadvertently reinforce populist claims of media bias (Esser et al., 2017; Krämer, 2018).

Through a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of three Flemish current affairs talk shows, this study therefore aims to shed light on (1) the prevalence of populist, anti-media populist, and anti-populist communication, and (2) the roles of diverse actors herein, and (3) how the populism-anti-media populism interplay manifests. The sample consists

of 60 episodes—20 each from direct competitors De Tafel van Gert (commercial broadcaster), Bar Goens (commercial broadcaster) and De Afspraak (public broadcaster)—aired between 28 April and 29 May 2025. To guide deductive coding, a literature-based framework was developed, distinguishing four modes of populism–media interaction: (1) Populism through media, (2) populism by media, (3) anti-media populism (4) anti-populism. Data coding and analysis are planned between January 2025 and April 2026. Findings will advance a more comprehensive and ecologically valid understanding of how populism and anti-populism manifest within the media–populism nexus.

JOS27 Uncertainty and Journalism

PP 0805 The place of inequality in journalism scholarship: A systematic literature review

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Social inequality has become a central concern across social sciences, with many of today's "wicked problems" tied to growing inequalities, as reflected in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. For many forms of inequality, understanding public discourse is crucial, as inequalities are not only materially structured but also discursively constructed and contested—placing journalism research at the core of scholarly engagement with inequality. Despite frequent engagement with issues of power, representation, and access to public communication, it remains unclear to what extent journalism studies has developed a coherent and cumulative body of knowledge on social inequality. While a recent literature review focused on communication about economic inequality (Vaughan et al., 2025), it remains unclear how journalism research engages with other forms of inequality. Therefore, we conducted a systematic literature review following the STAMP method (Rogge et al., 2024) to clarify the field's broader contribution. It covers English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters addressing any form of social inequality in relation to journalism. To be included, titles, abstracts, or keywords had to contain *inequality* or *equality* and *journalis**; broader terms such as *equal** were avoided due to their frequent use in generic phrases. The search was conducted in 2024 across Web of Science, EBSCO Communication & Mass Media Complete, and ProQuest, without restrictions on publication year. The initial search yielded 1,143 records; after removing duplicates, 765 publications remained, of which 234 were retained following manual screening for formal criteria and relevance. The final sample was coded using a quantitative–qualitative scheme, with intercoder reliability ranging from .53 to 1.0 (Brennan and Prediger's kappa; mean = .81).

Findings indicate a highly uneven landscape of inequality research in journalism studies. Research concentrates on a narrow set of inequality dimensions, with gender inequality addressed in well over half of the studies and racial or ethnic inequality in roughly a quarter, while class-related, economic, and many other forms of inequality—such as health, educational, environmental, digital, or criminal justice inequalities—receive little or no attention. Intersectional perspectives remain limited, with under 20% of studies adopting an explicitly intersectional approach. Across major domains of journalism scholarship, inequality research focuses primarily on journalism on an institutional level and on journalists as actors; inequality in journalistic content receives less attention, and inequality related to media use is largely absent. Within these domains, printed news media dominate, whereas journalistic practices, technologies, social media, and audience-related dimensions constitute blind spots. We find limited theoretical grounding, with few studies articulating clear definitions of specific inequality forms and almost none engaging with holistic theoretical frameworks (similar for diversity: Loecherbach et al., 2020). Finally, research sites and first authors are heavily concentrated in the Global North, particularly the United States and Western Europe, alongside a pronounced gendered authorship pattern in which women lead most research on (gender) inequality. Together, these findings highlight the need for a broader, more theoretically grounded, and more globally inclusive research agenda on social inequality in journalism studies, commensurate with the field's (potentially) central role in understanding inequality.

JOS27 Uncertainty and Journalism

PP 0806 Autonomy lost: Revisiting Bourdieu's nomos and the "small universe" of the journalistic field

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Within field theory, the concept of *nomos* refers to the autonomy a field possesses to determine its own laws in contrast to other societal fields (Bourdieu, 2005: 32–33). However, the autonomy a field has in setting out its vision and its sense of distinction from other fields in society is not without complexity, and it is certainly not absolute. Afterall, a field is a "microcosom within the larger social macrocosm", both independent from and influenced by other forces at play in society; put differently, it is "a small universe caught up in the laws of functioning of the larger universe" (Bourdieu 2005: 32).

Nomos also describes the 'rules of the game' set out by a field. When followed, these rules legitimate individual actors' positions within the field by offering a set of parameters and guiding logics. This paper picks up Bourdieu's concept of *nomos* to ask whether the sense of vision and division captured in his concept of autonomy persists. It accounts for external forces, including political and commercial ones (working in tandem), that are affecting journalism's ability to maintain its own distinct logics; its own rules.

To be blunt, that distinction is faltering in media systems where the competition for attention – in an economy increasingly predicated on attention – has incentivized ignoring, negating, and even rewriting these rules. This is evident in the already-uneasy relationship between journalism and politics as two fields of power, amplified by politics' handmaids in these incursions, including platforms companies and large corporate media owners that have prioritized commercial over normative ambitions (Eldridge, *forthcoming*).

It focuses narrowly on the incursions into the journalistic field made by political and corporate media actors through a systematic discursive and sentiment analysis of right-wing, digital political media in the US and UK. In these systems, recent developments have offered warning signs of autonomy loss, with politicized political media engaging in affective and aggrieved narratives of a fractured society (Eldridge, 2025), and the lines between journalism and politics being erased by sitting politicians taking on 'news media' functions (e.g., *GB News*), exerting control over content (e.g., *CBS News*), and with press rooms taken over by politicized peripheral media actors who once served as campaign staffers, government employees, and elected representatives (Eldridge, *forthcoming*).

From its analysis, this paper argues journalism is suffering the consequences of these incursions. With 'news media' following rules that originate in other small universes, journalism's control over its own autonomy risks being lost. While journalism will always be shaped by larger social and political factors, the levels of political polarization and ideological fragmentation that we are seeing represented is often more intense and more widespread than we would find were we to poll either UK or US society (Eldridge 2025: 29–30; 194–196). This paper concludes with a model for understanding the complex socialization processes that need to be accounted for when trying to understand how fields are impinging upon one another, and how they affect the field's own sense of vision and division.

JOS27 Uncertainty and Journalism

PP 0807 AI in journalism: Analysis of practices in Ibero-America

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In this work, we analyse thirty case studies of the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism in Ibero-America (the cultural region comprising Spain, Portugal, and Latin American countries). Our study addresses a gap in current research by examining how AI is reshaping the media in a less-studied part of the world. This effort uncovers innovative practices and emerging challenges that are relevant to both researchers and media professionals worldwide.

AI is having a profound impact across global media ecosystems, generating unprecedented opportunities as well as significant challenges. Media studies are striving to interpret this phenomenon, yet the existing literature still displays notable gaps. For example, a literature review we conducted revealed a marked underrepresentation of the Global South compared with Western Europe and North America.

Expanding the geographical scope of research is essential for addressing global inequalities and for exploring disparities in technological infrastructure, media freedom, and regulatory oversight. At the same time, it offers a valuable opportunity to diversify approaches to the topic by incorporating the wide range of strategies and perspectives that emerge across different contexts.

Focusing on Ibero-America makes it possible to include an important region of the Global South in this discussion, while enabling comparisons with Global North countries that share linguistic and cultural ties with it.

Our work begins with the construction of an exhaustive and up-to-date catalogue of AI implementation experiences in Ibero-American journalism. Using a case study methodology, we extract a sample of thirty examples from this catalogue and analyse them in depth.

We examine questions such as where AI is used in the news value chain (from back-end applications to algorithmic personalisation); what the main objectives are (improving fact-checking, enhancing investigative work, increasing revenues, etc.); how AI is transforming newsroom practices and journalistic labour; and how ethical issues are addressed (including accountability, independence, and environmental impact). We also assess how scalable and transferable these experiences are, with the aim of making our research useful to practitioners.

Additionally, we compare our findings with those in the existing literature and with insights from a set of expert interviews, in order to evaluate the validity of current theories and identify trends specific to the Ibero-American context. Finally, we discuss the extent to which journalism in the region is incorporating AI in support of journalistic values, or instead yielding to corporate constraints.

This research is part of IA-COM project ("Artificial Intelligence for the Promotion of Quality Journalism and Media Literacy: Applied Technological Advances and Challenges in the Era of Disinformation"), a project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities.

JOS27 Uncertainty and Journalism

PP 0808 Churning the information cascade – PR, news agencies, and news outlets linked to copy-pasting practices

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As journalism faces ongoing challenges such as revenue loss and resource constraints, specialized beats such as science journalism have come under pressure, bearing manifold implications for journalistic text production. Our study explores the practices of online science journalism and its sources under the lens of churnalism: a process generally understood as the "recycling" of pre-packaged material from third parties such as press or agency releases by journalists without further editing. Due to factors like time pressures in daily routines, news outlets appear to rely on the republishing of content provided by news agencies, often verbatim. However, the emergence of this phenomenon remains underexplored: considering that news agencies themselves extensively use and copy press releases, there is a lack of empirical examinations tracing this "information cascade" – from the uptake of PR materials by news agencies to their subsequent (re-)publication in journalistic outlets. To examine this specific information cascade in science journalism – which seems to be especially subjected to churnalism – we draw on data related to press releases from two German research institutions. Instead of analyzing the news agency releases in isolation, we link original press releases to corresponding news agency copies and subsequent online media coverage through a qualitative content analysis (n = 35), focusing on both formal and compositional aspects. Our findings reveal a cascade-like information transfer characterized by the verbatim copying of parts of the material, both from press releases to news agency copies, and from agency copies to media coverage. This distinct type of journalistic recycling primarily manifests in the material through the copy-pasting of parts of the text body, occasionally supplemented by additional information not present in the original material. Within the context of churnalism in science journalism, the results highlight the influential role of both PR and news agencies as well as their interconnections on journalistic reporting, with implications for copy-pasting practices and agenda-setting processes in this nexus.

JOS27 Uncertainty and Journalism

PP 0809 Independent journalism in Europe: Resilience and innovation amid the media crisis

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In the present media landscape, journalism faces a crisis of legitimacy, reflected in the number of news avoiders, low trust in news, and growing concerns about disinformation (Digital News Report, 2025). Moreover, the consumption of news through social media and the decline in paid-subscription models threaten the sustainability of commercial media. This scenario reflects, among other concerns, a saturated market model, in which decisions about the value of news are geared towards capturing clicks and generating mass content, relegating the relevance and credibility to a secondary role. Hence, the present research is situated within the debate on the crisis of legitimacy and sustainability of journalism, and on emerging journalistic configurations—such as independent journalism (Beers, 2006)—embedded within the diverse landscape of alternative media (Harlow & Salaverría, 2016), which seek to address this crisis. These organisations, self-proclaimed as independent, adopt new formats of production, funding and organisation, positioning themselves as critics of the status-quo, and the economic interests dominating mainstream media. Through a content analysis of 25 European independent journalism organisations and 14 semi-structured interviews with journalists, this research sought to analyse what does independence mean for these organisations, and how that reflects in the funding models adopted, their editorial values, organisational structure and production practices. The results show a significant growth of independent organisations across Europe, most being digital, with 65% of them appearing since 2014, reflecting a still growing sector. Considering the funding model, individual donations, foundation grants and fellowships occupy the three main sources of funding, with foundations having the largest share. Nevertheless, interviewees didn't report any conflicts of interest or fears of influence from foundations, recognizing a mutual relationship of trust, as they play an essential role for maintaining sustainability. Financial independence is also ensured through a strong emphasis on revenue diversification, with organisations relying on workshops, sales of publications, subscription models or ethical advertising. Regarding editorial values, among the core values shared by the organisations are independence, observed in 20 (n = 25), investigative journalism, observed in 17 (n = 25), non-profit status, observed in 16 (n = 25) and transparency, observed in 14 (n = 25) organisations. Reflecting on the future, journalists were optimistic about the growth of independent journalism, claiming that readers are looking for alternative information and are willing to pay for it. Although sustainability is an on-going challenge, most projects have seen a growth in donations and readers, as well as in revenue. Reflecting on the future of the sector, journalists were optimistic about the growth of these independent organisations, claiming that readers are looking for more alternative information, and are willing to pay for quality reporting. Although sustainability is an on-going challenge, most projects have seen a growth in donations, readers and revenue. Amid a crisis in the media landscape, alternative and independent organizations have emerged as a force of resistance, aiming to restore the social value of journalism and to reconsider the traditional models that have long underpinned the profession.

JOS28 Futures of Journalism

PP 0820 Mapping two decades of Artificial Intelligence in news media: From niche to mainstream to politicized

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Interest in Artificial Intelligence has grown exponentially and transversally amongst Journalism Studies for the past decade (Ioscote et al., 2024). Research has thoughtfully studied journalistic perceptions and outlooks on AI (de-Lima-Santos & Ceron, 2021), its applications (Sonni et al., 2024), ethical concerns (Misri et al., 2025; Reynolds & Nolan, 2023), and media regulations (Sánchez-García et al., 2025). However, less attention has been paid to the narratives on AI technologies that news media project onto the public agenda, with most literature focusing on case studies prior to the 2022 ChatGPT, chatbots and GenAI boom (Cools et al., 2022; Echauri, 2024; Nguyen & Hekman, 2022).

Drawing on agenda-setting and framing theories, this research addresses this knowledge gap by examining news media portrayals of AI through 64 technical and contextual terms (e.g. chatbot, deepfake, ChatGPT, OpenAI) during the period 2001–2024. Thus, this study is driven by three research questions: (1) Which AI-related issues—including AI itself—are highlighted in news media; (2) how these are framed and with what attributes; (3) how this narrative has evolved over time.

To this end, N = 7,538 news were automatically retrieved via The New York Times and The Guardian APIs using 64 terms related to AI technologies, companies and trends. After selecting the news that matched the object of study, a final sample of N = 3,177 was subjected to a content analysis structured around 3 categories: issues and attributes; framing; and roles and archetypes in the representation of AI.

Findings mark the start of the coverage in 2001 in both digital news media, with two main publication peaks: a 241% increase in 2014 and a 695% increase in 2023, following Google's acquisition of DeepMind and the release of ChatGPT, respectively. Although the coverage has kept mostly neutral regarding software, tech and scientific progress, its impact on socio-economic issues—employment, health, culture, politics—has gained traction in recent years, turning AI into a mainstream, yet polarized and politicized issue. While the economic growth of Big Tech or the progress of AI as an assistant in health and medical research are portrayed as positive, negative frames increasingly permeate the media agenda concerning AI's social and ethical risks, emphasizing biases, informative disorders, and threats to employment, democracy, diversity, and child protection. A portrayal that tends to depict—and confuse—AI with anthropomorphic robots or human-like qualities, but also through the companies and human faces that "represent" them (owners, founders, CEOs).

While these findings show that interest in AI is not new, they encourage reflection on the role that the media currently play as agenda-setters, observers, commenters, and gatekeepers, as these narratives form part not only of the collective worldview but also everyday practices. This shift to the mainstream has turned AI from a scientific-technological advancement into a buzzword (Gbadegeshin et al., 2021); "a news topic in transition" (Nguyen & Hekman, 2022, p. 449) that becomes part of the editorial, political and ethical positioning of the media, requiring as much accuracy as accountability in an uncertain battleground for the attention, trust and credibility of a (dis)connected audience in a hi-tech context.

JOS28 Futures of Journalism

PP 0821 This player is going to be the next star of Bayern Munich … Who? Are new business models in digital journalism changing established news structures?

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Introduction

For more than a hundred years, one of the most established ways of journalistic news storytelling followed the so-called inverted pyramid model of answering the most important questions right at the beginning of a news story: who, what, when, where, why, and how (5W1H). Based on findings from a larger research project funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) we wanted to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How have news articles evolved over the last hundred years in German news?
RQ2: What explanations for this evolution can be found?

Framework

For Michael Schudson, news writing following the inverted pyramid model "was a literary invention that asserted the journalist's authority to define for readers the most important element of a news event" (Schudson, 1991, p. 438). This "form of news" (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2001) was invented in Anglo-American journalism by the end of 19th century (Pöttker, 2003) and was also established in German journalism at the beginning of the 20th century (Author, 2016). It is still trained in journalism school and described in journalistic textbooks. What is missing, is an analysis of how this form developed over time.

Methods

Applying computational methods (Fan et al., 2025; Van Atteveldt & Peng, 2021) like natural language processing (NLP), including named-entity recognition (NER), and part-of-speech-tagging (POS), we analyzed n = 8,568 articles from German newspapers and their web pages from 1924 until 2024, every ten years, to find out, if who? what? when? where? were answered within the first 300 characters of the text. Additionally, we interviewed n = 15 German journalists from different generations on how they learned to write news stories and on their journalistic working routines.

Findings

The findings of our automated content analysis show that the inverted pyramid model remained relatively stable during the Weimar Republic, National Socialism and WW2, and survived even communism in East Germany as well as the rise of television. In our data, the model of answering the w-questions at the beginning then is declining from 2004 onwards to 2024. Most of the interviewed journalists claim that they learned the inverted pyramid model. Some younger journalists said that it contradicts new business models.

Discussion

Journalism is always changing and has always changed. New forms of multimedia storytelling arose in the digital media ecosystem. At the ECREA conference in Brno we want to discuss, how new business models are challenging the inverted pyramid model. Headlines like “Heidi Klum reveals dirty secret” try to provoke the next click and get readers behind a pay-wall, by not answering the most important w-question.

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JOS28 Futures of Journalism

PP 0822 Towards an open media ethics? A cartography of outward-facing discourses of four French-speaking media councils (2019–2025)

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This ongoing study investigates how media councils develop outward-facing discourses in response to increased political instability, declining public trust in the media, technological evolutions, and information disorders.

It offers a cartography of public discourses developed by four media councils in French-speaking Belgium, Switzerland, France, and Quebec. Informed by Ward’s (2016) model of open media ethics, this mapping aims to identify (1) professional and non-professional recipients of these discourses; (2) the degree of audience participation in shaping and reacting to these discourses; (3) how media councils redefine their missions. It also unveils (4) the intentions and nature of these discourses.

To achieve these objectives, the theoretical framework combines media accountability (Fengler et al., 2022), Ward’s global open media ethics (2016; 2019), and metajournalistic discourse (Carlson, 2016).

Media councils have been studied as media accountability and professional self-regulation tools (Bertrand, 2000; Fengler et al., 2022; Eberwein et al., 2018). Recent literature focuses on councils’ traditional missions of standards-setting and complaint-handling (Harder, 2021; Lauk, 2021; Verhoeven & Van Leuven, 2025). However, few works examine how they are redefining their scope (MCDA, 2025) and mostly provide descriptive overviews of their public discourses (MCDA, n.d.). Literature lacks a comprehensive understanding of the intentions behind these discourses and what those reveal about the evolution of media ethics. This research fills this gap by providing a cartography informed by Ward’s framework (2016; 2019) on global media ethics. This model advocates for participatory, dialogue-based media ethics and helps assess whether a group is oriented towards more open forms of ethics (Ward, 2016). To complement this analysis, we frame media councils’ discourses as metajournalistic discourses (Carlson, 2016). While this approach is rarely applied to media councils (Eldridge, 2025), it helps understand the intentions behind media councils’ discourses through processes of boundary-setting, definition-making, and legitimization.

The study is based on (1) a thematic analysis of 35 semi-structured interviews with different categories of media council members, and (2) a thematic analysis of media councils’ outward-facing discourses. The corpus comprises 100 texts (newsletters, information bulletins, annual reports, press releases), 5 videos, and 6 podcasts across the four councils.

The four councils (French-speaking Belgium, Switzerland, France, and Quebec) were chosen because of their common language, similar organizational structures, and practices. Three of them operate in small media systems sharing similar characteristics (Puppis et al., 2009; Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and journalistic cultures (Ramaprasad et al., 2019).

Preliminary results show that (1) all councils are including more public-oriented activities and discourses, but only Quebec's one explicitly assumes this new mission. (2) The main audiences of media councils remain journalists and citizens, but media councils' investment in outreach and research activities may reflect a desire to communicate with political authorities. (3) The most frequently cited motivation of outward-facing discourses is to combat disinformation and rebuild public trust. However, some media councils seem to legitimize themselves in the context of attacks on the press and low trust in the media.

JOS28 Futures of Journalism

PP 0823 Source diversity initiatives in Danish news media: Catalyst for change or business as usual?

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At a time of growing distrust in news and mainstream media worldwide, and amid global events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, source diversity in journalism is widely recognized as a key factor in fostering public trust and enhancing the legitimacy of news media (Moy, 2020). In this respect, paying attention to source diversity in journalistic reporting is regarded as an emerging yet contested issue in journalistic practice. This study explores how editors and journalists in Danish national news media perceive and implement initiatives designed to enhance source diversity. While similar research has been conducted in the United States (Grannan et al., 2025), this is the first study of its kind within a Nordic media context. In recent years, Nordic news organizations have increasingly emphasized source diversity. However, recent research has relied almost exclusively on content analyses, surveys, and interviews with journalists (Jørndrup, 2022; Kjeldsen et al., 2024; Mathisen, 2021; Sjøvaag & Pedersen, 2018; Niemi & Pitkänen, 2017), leaving editorial perspectives, strategies and decision-making largely unexplored.

Theoretically, this study draws on role theory (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017), specifically the framework of professional roles in journalism based on the hierarchies of influences model (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). Current research has primarily applied role theory to journalists' perspectives and practices (Hanitzsch, 2017; Mellado et al., 2023). This project focuses on both the editorial and journalistic perspectives, identifying ideals, practices, and potential gaps between the organisational and operational context where journalism is produced daily (Ferrucci & Kuhn, 2022).

Based on semi-structured interviews with eight editors and twelve journalists from six leading Danish media outlets that actively promote source diversity, this study presents a range of emic definitions of source diversity. The core findings show how different initiatives promoted by editors and organizations seek to strengthen source diversity in news coverage, how these initiatives are perceived by journalists, and whether they serve as catalysts for change or ultimately fall short of yielding significant changes in journalistic reporting. Interviews with editors reveal that their efforts primarily focus on monitoring sources- mostly in terms of gender- setting goals and raising awareness about insufficient diversity. Few dedicate time or develop tools to drive substantial changes. The outcomes remain modest: sustained managerial attention leads to minor improvements, but these effects tend to fade once the focus shifts elsewhere. Upcoming interviews with journalists will explore why these initiatives appear to have such limited impact. Specifically, they will examine whether journalists perceive source diversity as important and aligned with their professional role, as well as how issues of time and competing editorial priorities in the day-to-day newsroom work influence their engagement.

The study contributes to the conference theme of 'diversity of voices' by examining how source diversity is promoted by news organizations and the rationale behind these efforts, while also highlighting the structural and professional impediments to increasing source diversity in journalistic practice.

JOS28 Futures of Journalism

PP 0824 Networks of Influence: Journalism Innovation and the Politics of Public Support

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Over the past three decades, innovation has gained a prominent position as a potentially decisive response to journalism's challenges, gradually replacing quality as a dominant metajournalistic concept (Costera Meijer, 2020). Yet, research has shown that innovation often functioned as an inadequate guiding principle for journalism's structural transformation. News organizations tended to interpret it as a placeholder for short-term financial gains, pivoting from one tech project to another, often without clear long-term benefits (Creech & Nadler, 2018; Posetti, 2018; Hermida & Young, 2021).

Recently innovation has also emerged as a key funding rationale in media policy circles. Governments, particularly in Europe, have embedded innovation into policy frameworks, launching schemes to support journalism's digital transformation (Noster et al., 2025). However, these schemes have struggled to account for the complexity of the media ecosystems

they addressed, where public broadcasters, legacy groups, and news startups coexist. Empirical evidence shows that most recent funding initiatives have disproportionately benefited incumbents (Buschow, 2022; Kaltenbrunner et al., 2025; Zambelli, 2025; Eder & Sjøvaag, 2025). Why this outcome has become so common remains underexplored, especially in terms of how such schemes are conceptualized and what innovation rationales prevail in policy design.

To address this gap, this study investigates the formulation and design of a specific funding instrument: the Digital Transformation Programme of the Flemish Relanceplan, a €35 million initiative implemented between 2023 and 2024. Based on 23 semi-structured interviews, it explores(RQ1) the stakeholder network that co-shapes the funding instrument, and (RQ2) the consequences this has for how innovation is defined and mobilized by key actors.

Grounded in Policy Network Theory (Rhodes, 2007) and applying Stakeholder Analysis (Van den Bulck, 2019), this regionally-targeted study identifies several structural conditions that may help explain the generally conservative character behind most innovation schemes. Legacy media actors appear closely tied to intermediaries and policymakers, while smaller organizations remain peripheral. This asymmetry enables informal access routes that favor early influence over programme design. As a result, a Matthew effect shapes resource distribution: actors with existing capital, legitimacy, and networks are best positioned to benefit. Meanwhile, a loosely defined framing of innovation allows a dominant techno-centric logic, largely aligned to platform actors' discursive framing, to override more diverse or public-interest interpretations. This ultimately narrows the spectrum of supportable journalistic models and beneficiaries within journalism innovation policy.

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JOS29 Journalistic Work I.

PP 0907 Communicating scientific uncertainty in the news: Generalist journalists' conceptual understandings, challenges, and strategies

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Many of today's crises and concerns are rooted in socio-scientific issues where scientific and social problems are deeply intertwined and no single, clear-cut solutions exist (Zeidler et al., 2003) – examples include climate change and genetic engineering. Reporting on such issues confronts journalists with the challenge of understanding and conveying the inherent uncertainty of scientific knowledge (de Jong et al., 2024; Dunwoody, 2020; Gustafson & Rice, 2020). Scientific uncertainty refers to a "state of incomplete knowledge that can result from a lack of information or from disagreement about what is known or even knowable" (IPCC, 2015, p. 128). Gustafson and Rice (2019) distinguish four forms of uncertainty: deficient uncertainty (lack of evidence), technical uncertainty (methodological or statistical limitations), consensus uncertainty (ambiguous or conflicting findings), and fundamental uncertainty (findings may prove wrong). Incorporating such uncertainties into reporting requires journalists to possess both conceptual understanding and a complex set of professional skills (Fiscutean & Rosu, 2025; Guenther & Ruhrmann, 2016). COVID-19 and the climate crisis have shown as striking examples that generalist journalists are increasingly required to cover highly specialized scientific topics and communicate scientific uncertainty, often without extensive training or experience in identifying, handling, and conveying it (Capurro et al., 2021; Painter, 2013). However, existing research on uncertainty communication has focused predominantly on science journalists, leaving the perspectives of generalist journalists underexplored.

Our study addresses this gap by using semi-structured online interviews with 14 generalist journalists from local, regional, and national newsrooms in Germany. We examined how these journalists conceptualize scientific uncertainty, asked about the challenges they perceive in communicating it to their audiences, and the strategies they describe for conveying it.

The results suggest that the interviewed journalists perceive scientific uncertainty as an inherent aspect of science that arises mainly when science cannot (yet) answer questions relevant to their audiences. For conveying scientific uncertainty, our study reveals a meta-challenge journalists emphasized: enabling the public to make informed decisions despite, and in consideration of, uncertainty. Journalists view scientific uncertainty as prompting an expansion of their traditional neutral and critical role toward more extensive interpretive and contextualizing practices. For example, they describe using knowledge about their audiences to anticipate and prevent potential misinterpretations or rejection of information on socio-scientific issues due to the presence of scientific uncertainty. We term this role-extending practice "stewarding" public engagement with scientific uncertainty. It reflects journalists' awareness that communicating scientific uncertainty can yield negative outcomes (e.g., delegitimization) and encompasses their willingness to go beyond traditional role boundaries to foster its

understanding and thus enable its inclusion in public decision making. Following from this meta-challenge, our interviews revealed three sub-challenges journalists perceive: making uncertainty understandable and accessible, avoiding confusion and frustration, and generating interest. To address these challenges, journalists mentioned eight strategies, including sensitive wording and tone, complexity reduction, constructiveness, and storytelling.

Overall, our results suggest that generalist journalists perceive the communication of scientific uncertainty as a challenging and carefully attended aspect of their practice, demonstrating conceptual awareness and a repertoire of distinctive strategies.

JOS29 Journalistic Work I.

PP 0908 A mixed-methods study on the effectiveness of discursive journalism for reducing affective polarization

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Affective polarization poses considerable challenges to democratic processes and social cohesion (e.g., Torcal et al., 2025). Although the relationship between the media and affective polarization is complex, it remains essential to address how journalists can mitigate this phenomenon or, at least, prevent its further reinforcement (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2023). We argue that Brosda's (2008) normative concept of *discursive journalism* offers a promising approach in this regard. Discursive journalism is anchored in Habermas's (1984, 1987) ideal of deliberation and Baum's (1994) conception of journalistic action as a means of cultivating a "*rationality of mutual understanding*" in society (German: *"Verständigungsrationalität"*) (Brosda, 2008). According to discursive journalism, journalists are expected to play an active role as *advocates of discourse* who are responsible for establishing a discursive environment that stimulates *multi-perspectivity* and *rationality* or, in other words, an inclusive and orderly exchange of ideas driven by the strength of arguments (Brosda, 2008).

Against this backdrop, we aim to examine whether journalistic content that follows the implications of discursive journalism reduces affective polarization in recipients over time (*RQ*). We employ a mixed-methods approach with two consecutive studies to address our research question. First, we conducted a longitudinal survey experiment across three survey periods with a quota sample of N_{t0} = 3,800 respondents from Germany via an online access panel. Respondents were randomly assigned to an experimental (EG) and control group (CG). Each survey period involved a video clip of a fictional TV debate show featuring a journalist and two discussants with opposing views on a polarizing topic as a stimulus. In the EG video (*discursive condition)*, the journalist serves as an *advocate of discourse*, fostering *rationality* and *multi-perspectivity* in the debate, whereas, in the CG video (*non-discursive condition)*, the journalist acts more passively.

Second, we conduct an in-depth focus group study with a small sample of respondents from our survey experiment to further contextualize and enrich our quantitative findings.

This study contributes to journalism studies in both theory and practice: First, it introduces the normative concept of discursive journalism as a potential avenue for addressing affective polarization. Second, it tests the empirical soundness of this concept's posited potential using a rigorous mixed-methods approach.

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JOS29 Journalistic Work I.

PP 0909 Understanding journalistic culture by comparing embeddedness in sport and business journalism

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Recent scholarship has pointed to the value of examining embeddedness as a key dimension of journalistic culture (Juarez Miro, et al., 2025; Vos & Hanusch, 2024), with the focus largely on journalists' position in local communities (McAdam & Hess, 2024; Rivas-de-Roca, et al., 2025). The scholarship has identified embeddedness – understood as the extent to which one shares the values, experiences, histories, places, and languages of a group – as a plausible influence on the roles,

epistemologies, and ethical orientations of journalists (Vos & Hanusch, 2024) and as a possible driver of audience trust and engagement (Schiffrin, 2019).

This paper builds on this line of research by empirically examining and comparing the value of embeddedness in two journalistic beats: sport and business reporting. These beats are analytically interesting because both involve groups who use specialized language and share values, and news coverage often involves journalists spending time in close proximity to those groups, but there are also substantial differences in the groups or subcultures they cover (Bradshaw & Minogue, 2019; Grünberg & Pallas, 2013). Embeddedness in these beats is seen as both a blessing and a curse – close connection leads to deep understanding of the beats, but the lack of power-distance leads to suspicion from fellow journalists, resulting, for example, in sport reporting being seen as journalism's 'toy department' (Rowe, 2007; Boyle, 2017).

To further enhance our understanding of embeddedness, this paper asks three broader research questions. First, we ask how sport and business journalists understand embeddedness within a) the subcultures they cover, b) within broader societal culture, c) within their beats, and d) within the institution of journalism. Second, we ask how sport and business journalists' embeddedness relates to their orientations regarding their a) roles, b) epistemologies, and c) ethics. Finally, we ask how sports and business journalists differ along their understandings of embeddedness as well as their roles, epistemologies and ethical orientations.

To address these questions, we draw on more than 30 in-depth interviews with sport and business journalists based in Austria, a country that bears many similarities with other Western media systems. Austrian journalistic culture has a strong orientation toward the detached observer role, with autonomy being highly valued (Hanitzsch et al. 2025) – both key aspects which have been seen as clashing with the practice of both sport and business journalism. Further, both beats are covered in both established traditional media as well as in dedicated, specialist outlets, allowing for a variety of organizational environments and their influences to be studied.

While data collection is ongoing at the time of submission, preliminary insights show some considerable similarities in relation to these journalists' understandings of embeddedness as well as their journalistic culture, but they also point to some nuanced differences that allow for deeper insights into the ways in which journalistic embeddedness can be a useful explanatory concept for studying journalism comparatively.

JOS29 Journalistic Work I.

PP 0910 Moving to the "why" of news. The rise and development of interpretive journalism in the 21st century

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Since the 1960s, journalists have increasingly focused on explaining and interpreting events and the reasons these happened, rather than just reporting on them (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). In both scholarship and journalism practice, it is argued that journalism has shifted from reporting on the "what, who, when, where and how" of news, to explaining and answering the "why" question (Patterson, 1993; Patterson, 1996; Barnhurst & Mutz, 1997). While interpretive journalism has attracted greater attention in academic debate, empirical studies remain scarce. Most claims rely on a few content analyses from the 1980s and 1990s, predating the rise of the internet, and focusing only on the United States and predominantly on election news (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012).

Due to this lack of empirical evidence, scholarly criticism on the presumed rise of interpretive journalism has increased. Scholars not only highlight the limited scope of existing studies, but note that these lack a clear definition of interpretive journalism, often distinguishing only between descriptive and non-descriptive news. Because interpretive journalism was operationalized in various ways, comparisons across findings were difficult. Scholars have therefore suggested to operationalize interpretive journalism more clearly, focusing on journalistic explanations of current events, personal evaluation, and predictions of the future (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012; Soontjens, 2019).

However, memory scholars argue that research on interpretive journalism lacks an emphasis on history. They argue that historical context needs to be incorporated into the definition and studies of interpretive journalism, as journalists often use history to explain recent events; past events serve as a benchmark and explanatory ground for understanding the ever-changing present and are used as analogies to predict future events (Neiger & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2016; Edy, 1999; Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014).

This study responds to such calls for more empirical research on interpretive journalism as well as a clear operationalization and a specific focus on history. We analyze interpretive journalism in the Netherlands through a quantitative content analysis of articles (N = 3000) in two national and one regional newspaper, covering the period 2004–2024. We specifically focus on how journalists evaluate the news, use current information to predict future developments, and use information about the past to interpret and contextualize ongoing events and actions. The Netherlands has been chosen as a case study because the results will be comparable with previous longitudinal studies in Europe, which have mostly focused on countries with a longer democratic tradition. Secondly, most studies about the Netherlands focus on election coverage during the 1990s, and lack a long-term perspective. This case study offers an opportunity to build on previous research and gain insights into the long-term development of Dutch journalism in the 21st century, fostering an understanding of

interpretative journalism over time and since the rise of the internet. Moreover, we further refine its conceptualization, highlighting the importance of history in interpretive journalism as well as differences and similarities between regional and national journalism. Preliminary results show that journalists often incorporate historical context into articles to explain current events, making it a central feature of interpretative journalism.

JOS29 Journalistic Work I.

PP 0911 The fragility of news accuracy: Negotiating the ideal and practice of accuracy in contemporary journalism

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Accuracy is regarded as a foundational norm of journalism that is not only of paramount importance to the way journalists perform their professional role, but also as a key condition underlying public trust in news and evaluations of media credibility (Sterling, 2009; Urban & Schweiger, 2014). Audiences expect news media to provide reliable, verified information as a basis for accountability and professional integrity (Joseph, 2011; Porlezza & Russ-Mohl, 2013). At the same time, what counts as "accurate" is not universally defined: expectations of accuracy vary, and journalists may therefore translate this norm into practice in different ways, depending on their perceptions of audience expectations.

Theoretically, accuracy has been conceptualized as reporting that deviates as little as possible from reality (Lawrence & Grey, 1969; Porlezza, 2019). However, both journalists and researchers acknowledge that fully representing reality is epistemologically and practically unattainable (Gauthier, 2005). This tension is particularly evident in discussions of subjective accuracy, which refers to accuracy of meaning and narrative interpretation rather than the correct reporting of discrete facts. Although subjective accuracy is explicitly reflected in many ethical codes, it proves more difficult to translate into journalistic practice, as it intersects with other normative values such as fairness, completeness, etc. (Boudana, 2016).

These conceptual challenges are further intensified in a contemporary information environment characterized by speed, uncertainty, and competing information flows from a wide range of actors (Bjerknes, 2024; Shapiro et al., 2013). News production is marked by continuous updates, retrospective corrections, and revisions of earlier reporting, often under intense competitive pressure to deliver breaking news (Timmerman, Van Leuven, & Bronselaer, 2025). These pressures are exacerbated by economic constraints that have reduced newsroom resources and increased reliance on generalist journalists, limiting time for verification and in-depth contextualization (Blach-Ørsten, Hartley, & Wittchen, 2021; Connolly, 2024).

Technological developments further complicate journalistic accuracy. Journalists express uncertainty about the implications of generative AI and social media for reliable reporting (Trattner et al., 2022; Vergeer, 2018). Although these platforms increase access to sources, they also introduce verification difficulties, particularly when dealing with anonymous accounts (Xu & Gutsche Jr, 2021). Despite these challenges, audienceexpectations for timely and error-free reporting remain high (Anderson, 2025; Manninen, 2020).

Although accuracy remains a widely endorsed normative ideal, limited empirical research has examined how journalists themselves experience and enact this norm in daily practice, as existing studies have largely focused on verification, error correction, or inaccuracies from the perspective of news subjects (Palmer, 2013; Porlezza, 2019). Few recent studies examine how journalists define accuracy, how they prioritize it, and which aspects they perceive as most difficult to uphold (Shapiro et al., 2013). Building on previous insights, this study examines how journalists conceptualize and negotiate accuracy in professional practice. Drawing on survey data from Belgian journalists, it explores how accuracy is defined, enacted, and prioritized, as well as the challenges journalists perceive with respect to both its objective and subjective dimensions. By foregrounding journalists' own perspectives, the study contributes to a more integrative understanding of news accuracy under contemporary production conditions.

JOS30 TikTok and News

PP 0912 Journalists and influencers navigating news on TikTok during a natural disaster: Same game, different rules

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The values of journalism and journalistic practice itself are under dispute—a lively debate occurring across all communication spaces, including those originally focused on entertainment that have now become entry points for information. TikTok is a clear example of this within a platformized context in which journalism seeks to maintain its relevance while experiencing tensions stemming from algorithmic logics and peripheral actors.

In this scenario, we propose the need to comparatively analyze the content published by journalistic actors, content creators, and the most viral posts in the coverage of a given event, comparing the thematic agenda they address, their informational treatment, and their adaptation to the platform. The torrential rains in Valencia (Spain) in 2024, known as the DANA, serve as the case study in this research to understand how a phenomenon of great informational relevance is represented in real time by news outlets, content creators, and viral content.

The study begins with the collection of 55,042 posts published between October 29 and November 5 that mentioned one of the 19 most affected municipalities, using a novel data collection approach through the TikTok Research API and Python—a method applicable to other research in digital journalism. After several stages of dataset evaluation, multiple criteria were applied to obtain a final sample of 45,368 videos. From this dataset, random subsamples were generated for each of the relevant defined categories (news outlets, content creators, and viral posts), resulting in a total of 300 videos analyzed, which were subjected to a mixed-method content analysis.

The results indicate differences in thematic coverage and in the construction of news about the DANA. What happened on October 29 is the main focus in most viral and news outlets videos, whereas influencers place greater emphasis on volunteers. Regarding the use of sources, it is noteworthy that 46% of influencer videos omit them.

With respect to information treatment, a high presence of opinionated content is observed among influencers (43%) and viral posts (31%), while news outlets remain largely distant from this practice (6%). Both sensationalist and spectacle-driven content are predominant among the most viral videos, which are also the ones that most frequently lack spatiotemporal context. Conversely, among influencers we find that 19% of videos exhibit a service-oriented purpose, particularly regarding the availability of aid and volunteer logistics.

In terms of format adaptation, news outlets make the greatest effort, while such adaptation is low or absent in most viral and influencer content. Finally, we can advance that news outlets show strong guarantees, with 94% of their videos avoiding significant information disorders, whereas we find videos that certainly or likely misinform among influencers (15%) and viral posts (10%).

This case illustrates how journalism seeks to maintain its legitimacy in an environment where journalistic standards are increasingly blurred. Various actors attempt to fulfil a journalistic role but perform it differently, seeking either to imitate news outlets or to replace them. The study therefore identifies the risks faced by audiences who now rely on platforms such as TikTok for information.

JOS30 TikTok and News

PP 0913 'From the field to porridge': Social media influencers as gatekeepers in finnish TikTok journalism

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Journalism has become increasingly platformized and the use of social media is a standard for legacy news outlets around the globe (Newman et al., 2024). Similarly, social media influencers as content producers for legacy news outlets have gained traction in newsrooms (Author). Previous research has looked at social media influencers in general (Leaver et al., 2020), in marketing (Reinikainen, 2022), as political influencers (Pöyry, 2023) and from the perspective of (freelance) journalists who act as influencers (Mellado & Hermida, 2022). However, a deeper theoretical and empirical understanding of the use of social media influencers as journalistic content producers for legacy media is lacking (cf. Hurcombe, 2024).

This study provides a better understanding of this relationship by presenting a case of the Finnish public service media Yle's use of a social media influencer as a journalistic content producer. Between July-September 2024, Yle's youth brand Yle Kioski published a TikTok series 'From the field to porridge' with a farmer-influencer called Amski. The dataset covering the production includes 15 TikTok videos, interviews with Yle's producer and the farmer-influencer (2 hours), and 26 pages of field notes from two meetings between them observed by the lead author.

By utilising qualitative iterative analysis (Tracy, 2018) and gatekeeping theory (Author), the study looks at the TikTok series' content (RQ1), and the journalistic norms and values Yle's producer and Amski negotiated for their production (RQ2). The research provides practical understanding of how gatekeeping power, i.e. decision-making power, is divided between the two actors, and how a social media influencer holds power over the shared content and the producer over journalistic norms. Theoretically, we see the influencer as the *gatekeeper of content* and the news producer as the *gatekeeper of journalistic norms*. In addition, the study extends gatekeeping theory to understand the role of social media influencers in the digital news environment.

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JOS30 TikTok and News

PP 0914 Citizens being "unalived"? Exploring the relationship between TikTok journalism and algospeak

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In his 2025 book, US linguist Adam Aleksic discusses how social media platform's far-reaching algorithms are transforming everyday language usage (Aleksic, 2025). One notable example is *unalive*, replacing "dead" or "to kill" (Schock et al., 2025). These types of new words are increasingly referred to as *algospeak*, a portmanteau of algorithm and Orwellian newspeak (Weingarten, 2025). They are launched into contemporary TikTok and wider social media language by necessity, as creators must be creative to bypass algorithmic censors, which ban posts containing specific words and phrases. Algorithmically-curated censorship can pose far-reaching problems for news media and individual journalists that seek to build a community of followers on the platform. With TikTok journalism rapidly expanding in size and scope (Degen et al., 2024; see also the 2025 Digital News Report for an international overview of the platform's rising popularity), little is known about how journalistic production and dissemination practices on the platform are constrained in practice. This study seeks to fill this gap in scholarship, proposing a multi-method methodological study design consisting of quantitative content analysis and in-depth semi-structured expert interviews and the following two research questions:

RQ1: To what extent is algospeak salient in journalistic content on TikTok?
RQ2: To what extent do journalists consider algospeak when they produce content for TikTok?

We focus on the TikTok channels curated by legacy news outlets (private and public service media-owned) in four European countries: Belgium, Denmark, Spain and the United Kingdom. This approach allows us to investigate algospeak across a diversity of different languages, offering a novel linguistic approach. We will randomly select samples of TikToks shared between January and March 2026 by eight news outlets, one publicly and one privately owned from each nation. A codebook will be developed based on prior TikTok journalism-related studies (Hase et al., 2023; Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024) and implement noting the presence or absence of algospeak words and phrases. Next to this, we seek to reach out to the eight selected news outlets and carry out interviews with one editor or journalist from each. These interviews will be operationalised to validate and contextualise our content analysis and provide more novel insights into how algospeak is affecting journalistic production and dissemination processes on TikTok. These interviews will be scheduled for the first quarter of 2026.

We seek to present preliminary findings at ECREA26, projecting that algospeak will be relatively common in influencing news production processes on TikTok as specific words and themes will actively be avoided, for instance related to the ongoing conflict in Palestine. At the time of writing and to the best of our knowledge, this would be the first study that investigates algospeak from a journalistic perspective. This would be our main contribution to the state-of-the-art in terms of TikTok journalism, social media algorithms affecting user behaviour, and freedom of expression being stifled as a result of algorithmic bans, which arguably is particularly threatening for the free, unfiltered dissemination of news and journalistic content intended to inform audiences without bias or censorship.

JOS30 TikTok and News

PP 0915 Between rigor and virality: A comparative analysis of Brazilian and Portuguese news media on TikTok

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In recent years, traditional media outlets have faced a significant decline in audience share, particularly among younger generations who increasingly turn to social media for news consumption. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, news organizations worldwide have intensified their presence on TikTok, a platform particularly favored by Generation Z (born from 1997 to 2012). Despite the growing body of research on media outlets' engagement with TikTok across various countries (Chobanyan & Nikolskaya, 2021; Estrada-García & Gamir-Ríos, 2023; Maroto-González et al., 2024; Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2022), there remains a significant gap in understanding how the Portuguese-language news media are adapting to this ecosystem. This study investigates the Lusophone context by comparing Brazil and Portugal, aiming to understand how news media from two different continents sharing the same linguistic background navigate the platform's unique requirements and audience expectations.

Guided by a platformization framework, the research examines how 12 news outlets (legacy and digital-born) from both countries are reshaping journalistic practices to fit TikTok's affordances. We analyzed the top 30 "popular" videos from each outlet (N = 360), covering Portuguese media (Expresso, Jornal de Notícias, Público, ECO, Mensagem de Lisboa, Observador) and Brazilian outlets (Estadão, Folha de S. Paulo, O Globo, Agência Pública, Aos Fatos, Congresso em Foco). Using a mixed-methods approach, we examine engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares), platform-specific features

(hashtags, stickers, GIFs, emojis, filters, sounds), news categories, content origination (repurposed vs. TikTok-native), and audience response patterns.

While the Brazilian data is currently under analysis, preliminary findings for the Portuguese media indicate that while Portuguese media outlets are actively using TikTok, their strategies vary widely. Although the ratio Plays/Followers is high among the digital natives, legacy media receive, on average, more comments. Notably, despite the extensive use of hashtags, many outlets underutilize platform-specific features that could foster stronger audience interaction.

The study addresses a dual objective: it explores how journalism can utilize digital platforms to extend its reach while critically assessing whether this adaptation represents a valuable evolution or if the pursuit of virality compromises journalistic rigor. By linking platform logics to editorial choices and audience practices, this research contributes to understanding the evolving relationship between journalism and digital platforms in Portuguese-language contexts.

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JOS30 TikTok and News

PP 0916 News on TikTok: Narrative strategies at scale and their reception among young audiences

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The rapid rise of TikTok as a news platform marks a profound shift in how journalism is produced, distributed, and experienced, particularly among younger audiences. More than half of leading news organisations now publish news content on TikTok, where short-form video, personalisation, and algorithmic visibility shape journalistic practices and audience expectations. Despite growing scholarly attention, there remains limited understanding of how platform-specific affordances transform news narrative strategies and how these transformations shape young audiences' perceptions of news values, credibility, and quality.

Addressing this gap, the paper examines how TikTok news videos reconfigure the relationship between engaging storytelling and factual truth claims, and how these reconfigurations are received by young audiences. Drawing on multimodal discourse analysis and intermedial approaches (Bateman & Tseng, 2023; Holt & Schirrmacher, 2022), the study conceptualises TikTok not merely as a distribution channel but as a structuring media environment in which professional norms, news storytelling approach and audience relations are renegotiated. Particular attention is paid to how truthfulness and credibility are constructed through multimodal performances, authenticity cues, and narrative authority, rather than through traditional institutional markers (Enli, 2015; Schirrmacher, 2024).

Methodologically, the paper combines large-scale, computationally grounded multimodal analysis of TikTok news videos (Tseng et al, 2026/forthcoming) from mainstream, alternative, and influencer-driven channels with audience-oriented reception studies focusing on young adults' experiences of news on the platform. The analysis identifies recurring audiovisual narrative strategies—such as personalisation, emotionalisation, fragmentation, and self-referential address—and examines how these strategies interact with markers of facticity, authenticity, and credibility, as well as how they are evaluated by young audiences.

The paper argues that TikTok journalism exemplifies a broader transformation in which journalistic authority is increasingly negotiated through affective engagement and intermedial storytelling rather than institutional distance or professional detachment. At the same time, the convergence of mainstream, alternative, and influencer-driven styles blurs established boundaries between journalism and other forms of mediated communication (Schirrmacher & Holt, 2026/forthcoming). TikTok journalism thus foregrounds a central tension in contemporary democratic communication: balancing engagement and visibility with enduring claims to truth, credibility, and public value.

This paper is based on the cross-faculty research project TACTik: Transformation and Consequences of News on TikTok, funded by the Swedish Research Council.

Keywords

Platform journalism; TikTok news; News quality; Multimodal discourse analysis; News reception

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JOS31 Journalists' Well-Being

PP 0925 Assaults on journalists and mental well-being: Evidence from Germany

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Journalism scholarship has paid increased attention to the work-related stress and mental well-being of journalists (e.g., Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2025; Hoak, 2021; Osmann et al., 2021; Šimunjak & Menke, 2022). At the same time, a growing body of studies is concerned with accelerated threats to journalists' safety and rising numbers of assaults on journalists in a variety of countries (e.g., Reporters Without Borders, 2025; Slavtcheva-Petkova et al., 2023, 2025). Initial evidence suggests that frequent exposure to these assaults may incur significant harm to journalists' psychological well-being (Lee & Park, 2024; Papendick et al., 2020). Despite these indications, journalism researchers have yet to explore the impact of attacks on and harassment of journalists on their work-related stress and mental well-being.

The current study aims to close this gap. Drawing on results of a survey of German professional journalists (N = 1301), this paper examines the effect of journalists' exposure to work-related assaults on their levels of psychological distress, psychological well-being, and the intention to leave the profession. Conceptually, we build on approaches common in occupational health psychology, notably the transactional stress model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the job demands-resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001). Mental-health-related outcomes were assessed using clinically validated inventories, including the K10 (for psychological distress; Kessler et al., 2002) and the WHO-5 (for psychological well-being; Staehr Johansen, 1998).

We tested the following hypotheses: H1: Journalists exposed to attacks and assaults in the workplace experience (a) higher psychological distress and (b) lower psychological well-being. H2: Journalists subjected to work-related assaults have a higher inclination to leave the profession.

The results show that among the surveyed journalists, 58% have experienced online harassment, and 44% have been exposed to attacks in personal interactions. About one third of them reported experiences of threats/intimidation, discrimination, and mobbing. Both of our hypotheses were confirmed. Journalists who were exposed to assaults in the work context reported higher psychological distress and scored lower on psychological well-being. They also considered leaving the profession more frequently. Overall, these results are concerning and call for a robust response from media organizations and policymakers.

JOS31 Journalists' Well-Being

PP 0926 The pursuit of meaning in journalism: Exploring Portuguese journalists subjective well-being

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There is a wide array of literature exploring the ways in which journalists are exercising the profession, in often precarious conditions and frequently under attack. Besides, they are often subject to long and irregular hours and many complain about the loss of status and recognition. All these add to their already extensive emotional labor, which can impact their wellbeing and negatively affect their mental health (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2023a; Deuze, 2023; Šimunjak & Menke, 2023), pushing journalists out of the profession. Some authors suggest we are looking at a "mental health crisis" within the media industry (Deuze, 2023; Storm, 2024), with "too few" opportunities for happiness in journalism (Lewis, 2023, 193).

Research around journalists' emotional labor, mental health, joy, resilience, happiness and well-being has been growing steadily. There are two approaches to well-being: hedonic (also referred to as subjective well-being) and eudaimonic (also referred to as psychological well-being). In journalism practice, eudaimonic well-being would be related to its normative

role of a public service mission and democratic ideals (Ragsdale & Newman, 2023, p. 35), resulting on a sense of fulfillment that derives from acting in accordance with strongly held/valued moral ideas (Stupart, 2024, p. 19).

In this presentation, we will explore Portuguese journalists' hedonic well-being, which is usually measured through two dimensions: enjoying what you do, or finding it useful (Bélair-Gagnon et al., 2023b, p. 21). We conducted semi-structured interviews with Portuguese journalists working for several types of news media (N = 50), gathering a purposive and snowballed sample, in order to understand what contributes to journalists' subjective well-being and happiness. Results from qualitative content analysis show that, similarly to what is described in the literature, journalists' subjective well-being is usually expressed through enjoying what you do and finding it useful. Indeed, interviewees talk about their profession as a "passion", mostly due to the "privilege" of "telling the world". This is mostly achieved through feature-writing, meeting interesting people and dealing with diverse topics. Furthermore, journalists refer to the usefulness of journalism, related to the notion of a public service mission – that was highlighted during COVID-19. In spite of feeling passionate for journalism, many interviewees admit they have thought about leaving the profession. This happens not because of journalism *per se*, rather to the conditions in which it is practiced, which contribute to the feeling that well-being is not actively promoted within newsrooms. Journalists claim that, whenever they have a sense of well-being, it is usually achieved through workplace environment and interpersonal relationships. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to analyze subjective well-being in Portuguese journalism, adding to the growing body of literature and shedding light into an often-underrepresented geographical context.

JOS31 Journalists' Well-Being

PP 0927 Beyond the Breaking News: Mental Health, Ethical Strain, and Resilience in Emergency Journalism

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Journalism is currently experiencing a period of profound transformation in which accelerated news cycles and economic pressure with increasing psychological strain. Within this context, emergency reporting represents a central yet underexamined field of journalistic practice. Journalists do not need to work in war zones or large-scale disaster contexts to become emergency reporters: local accidents, violent crimes, fires, or sudden deaths routinely confront them with acute situations of suffering, uncertainty, and time pressure. The probability of journalists being confronted with a potentially traumatic event is between 80 and 100 percent.

This paper presents findings from an empirical study that examines the consequences of emergency reporting for individual journalists, with a particular focus on resilience and mental health. It addresses two research questions: How do the consequences of reporting on specific emergency events manifest for journalists' health? And can journalists cope with emergency reporting, adapt, and even emerge strengthened – in other words, respond resiliently?

The study is grounded in an integrative, profession-oriented framework linking sociological and social psychological role theory with concepts from emergency psychology. Prior research indicates that journalists are uniquely exposed to ethical and emotional strain because they repeatedly witness potentially traumatic events while being expected to remain professionally detached, a constellation that can foster guilt and moral conflict (Browne et al., 2012; Backholm & Idås, 2015). Such ethical dilemmas have been shown to correlate with posttraumatic stress symptoms and broader impairments to mental health (Idås et al., 2019).

Methodologically, the study employs a multimethod triangulation design combining a survey with qualitative follow-up interviews (Flick, 2017). The empirical material is structured around four case studies of emergency events in Germany with 30 journalists. These cases represent different types of emergencies while sharing core characteristics such as fatalities, intense media pressure, and ethical ambiguity, allowing for a comparative analysis of consequences across contexts.

The findings reveal a differentiated pattern of outcomes. On the one hand, journalists reported immediate physical exhaustion, emotional involvement, and heightened stress during emergency assignments. In the weeks and months following the events, some experienced intrusion, hypervigilance, mistrust, and avoidance behaviors, consistent with trauma-related reactions described in previous research (Simpson & Boggs, 1999; Weidmann, 2008). Ethical dilemmas – particularly concerns about harming victims, violating personal values, or benefiting professionally from tragedy – emerged as central stressors and might lead to longer-term strain.

On the other hand, the study also identifies resilience processes and positive consequences. Many journalists described adaptive coping strategies, learning effects, and a strengthened professional self-concept. In several cases, emergency reporting led to increased confidence, ethical clarity, closer collegial relationships, and professional recognition, aligning with concepts of posttraumatic growth documented in earlier studies (Idås et al., 2019; McMahon, 2020).

Overall, the paper conceptualizes resilience in emergency journalism not as an individual trait but as a dynamic process shaped by ethical reflection, experience, and organizational support. It concludes that addressing the mental health consequences of emergency reporting is essential for sustainable working conditions and for maintaining journalistic quality in times of ongoing upheaval.

JOS31 Journalists' Well-Being

PP 0928 Coping with Care and Career: Gendered Strategies in Public Service Journalism

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This paper presents findings from an ongoing qualitative study employing grounded theory to examine how Czech female journalists working primarily in public service media negotiate emotional and mental well-being when making decisions about career development and family life. Drawing on in-depth interviews with eight female journalists, the study explores how gendered expectations embedded in journalistic work — such as norms of constant availability, professional dedication, and uninterrupted career trajectories — intersect with limited institutional support for caregiving in Czech society.

Public service media are normatively associated with values of social responsibility, equality, and inclusivity. However, participants' accounts reveal a persistent tension between these declared principles and everyday organizational practices. Respondents describe structural constraints that complicate the reconciliation of professional and family roles, including informal expectations of flexibility, workload intensity, and career continuity that disproportionately affect women with caregiving responsibilities.

Methodologically, the study applies grounded theory to foreground journalists' lived experiences and to inductively develop analytical categories from the data. Emerging concepts include coping strategies, emotional regulation, anticipatory decision-making, professional self-limitation, and ongoing identity negotiation within newsrooms. Coping strategies are not conceptualized as individualized psychological responses, they are understood as gendered and structurally conditioned practices shaped by organizational cultures, institutional norms, and broader societal arrangements governing care, work, and family roles.

Participants frequently describe career–family decisions as matters of individual responsibility, despite simultaneously recognizing the structural nature of the constraints they face. This individualization of responsibility contributes to emotional strain, reinforces gendered inequalities within journalistic organizations, and often results in constrained career trajectories for women journalists (even in the public service media). The paper argues that these coping strategies should be analyzed as situated responses to the institutional logics of public service journalism rather than as private choices, thereby highlighting the need to critically reassess how public service media address gender equality within their own organizational practices.

JOS31 Journalists' Well-Being

PP 0929 Freelancers or "forcedlancers"? Precarity among Portuguese journalists

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One of the many signs of the crisis affecting media and journalism is the growing job precarity among journalists. In Portugal, a significant portion of professionals live in a very precarious situation: no permanent contracts, job insecurity, very low pay, and no supplementary benefits (payment during holidays, days off, allowances). The reasons for this situation are related to the difficult economic situation of media companies, with a sharp drop in revenue from both advertising and sales or subscriptions. Forced to reduce costs, companies are cutting the item that weighs most heavily on their balance sheet: personnel expenses. Thus, newsrooms have been shrinking substantially, with the lack of permanent staff being compensated for by resorting to temporary workers, who are cheaper and more dispensable in crisis situations. Some of these journalists with no permanent labor contract have the voluntary status of freelancers, and therefore should not be classified as precarious: they choose this situation of independent workers to have greater freedom and frequently provide services to multiple companies. But many others, in fact, are not freelancers, but rather "forcedlancers" or "fakelancers," since they would prefer to have a stable and permanent link to a media outlet, but the company refuses to hire them in such conditions. And so, they provide services to a single company, being obliged to fulfill all the duties of any professional with a contract, but without having the same rights.

The purpose to better understand precarity among Portuguese journalists from their own perceptions led us to develop this research project. On the one hand, we sought to understand to what extent the personal and professional lives of these journalists are affected by their precarious situation. On the other hand, we tried to evaluate to what extent journalism practiced under these conditions is affected (and in what ways) by the fragile professional situation of many of its practitioners. In addition to a theoretical reflection on the concept of precariousness and its historical context, we developed empirical research consisting of a biographical approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 29 professional journalists considered to be precarious workers. The issues addressed in the interviews were framed within four axes: (1) views and self-representations of precariousness, (2) ethical challenges in the context of precarity, (3) work

routines of precarious workers, and (4) perceptions of employment and work in precarious conditions. The findings suggest that precarious journalists define their condition based on the objective conditions in which they work, but they also internalize a subjective feeling of unfair treatment, uncertainty regarding the future, and doubts about their continuity in this profession. But, paradoxically, almost all of them feel fulfilled by working in journalism, apparently compensating the precariousness of their working and living conditions with a great passion for the profession. Therefore, many admit to quit the job and eventually find another one where they feel better treated, but, on the other hand, it is difficult for them to take that step because they feel so deeply attached to journalism.

JOS32 Young Producers and Consumers

PP 1012 Inform or influence: Generational differences in journalistic role conceptions

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Journalistic practices of topic selection and framing play a decisive role in shaping public perceptions of social reality. Accordingly, journalistic role conceptions have long constituted a central focus of journalism research (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Weaver et al., 2007; Weischenberg et al., 2012). A substantial body of literature has examined the criteria guiding journalists' topic selection (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Schultz, 2007; Harcup & O'Neill, 2017), as well as transformations in professional role understandings—particularly in response to increasing audience participation in journalistic processes facilitated by digital and social media environments (Singer et al., 2011; Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2017; Newman et al., 2017).

An additional analytical perspective on journalistic role conceptions arises from the tension between objectivity and subjectivity. Normative models of journalism, rooted in news value theory, emphasize the aspiration to report as objectively and neutrally as possible. From the standpoint of democratic theory, this normative orientation is associated with the expectation that public opinion formation should be grounded in comprehensive and reliable information (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018; Dahlgren, 2005; Strömbäck, 2005). In contrast, the concept of *boundary work* foregrounds an alternative understanding of journalistic practice, in which transparent ethical and political positioning functions as a guiding principle (Gieryn, 1983; Carlson, 2015). This approach permits a degree of thematic partiality and explicitly acknowledges subjective, and in some cases activist, elements within journalism.

Despite extensive scholarship on journalistic role conceptions, the extent to which age and generational affiliation shape these understandings remains insufficiently examined. The present study addresses this research gap for Germany by investigating the following research questions:

RQ1: How important are established professional quality standards to German journalists from Generation X and Generation Y?

RQ2: Do journalists themselves perceive differences in journalistic role conceptions between Generation X and Generation Y?

The empirical analysis is based on semi-structured interviews conducted between October and December 2025 with twenty journalists from Generation X and Generation Y. The sample comprises recipients of the German journalism award *"30 under 30,"* which has been presented for two decades to outstanding journalists under the age of 30. The interview guide was developed on the basis of the established item battery on journalistic role conceptions from the *Worlds of Journalism Study* (Hanitzsch et al., 2011; 2019).

The findings indicate that while the professional self-understanding of journalists from both generations continues to be dominated by a neutral, mediating role conception, younger journalists between the ages of 25 and 35 feel significantly less bound by this norm. Members of Generation Y display a greater openness to incorporating their own values and personal experiences into their journalistic work and regard explicit positioning on certain issues as more legitimate. This tendency is especially pronounced in relation to socially polarizing topics such as climate change, migration, and feminism.

JOS32 Young Producers and Consumers

PP 1013 Whose perspectives shape journalism? Social background and role perceptions of early-career journalists

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The number of journalists holding academic degrees has been steadily increasing in Germany and Austria for several years (von Garmissen et al., 2025; Kaltenbrunner et al., 2020). This process of academisation is often interpreted as an indicator of growing professionalisation. At the same time, however, it has been associated with a decline in social diversity and the loss of non-academic perspectives within journalism (Kaltenbrunner et al., 2020). Moreover, the de facto academisation of the profession has raised entry barriers for individuals from lower social backgrounds (Kracke et al., 2024).

Against this backdrop, social background has gained increased relevance. Journalists' social origins shape internalised interpretative patterns that may influence topic selection, framing, and the representation of journalistic content (Lueg, 2012; Saxer & Schanne, 1981). A structural narrowing of access to the profession therefore entails risks for thematic diversity, journalistic credibility, and public trust in journalism, as well as for democratic discourse more broadly. The question of who produces media content thus carries a clear socio-political dimension, as a functioning democracy depends on trust in journalism.

Despite its significance, social background has so far received little systematic attention in journalism research. Although classism has recently been discussed more intensively in the media sector (Gamper & Kupfer, 2024; Theißl, 2023), empirical studies examining the effects of social diversity initiatives by German media organisations on the recruitment of early-career journalists remain scarce.

This paper addresses this research gap by presenting findings from the largest study to date on the social background of early-career journalists in Germany. The analysis is based on a standardized online survey of 250 journalism trainees, including newsroom trainees and students at journalism schools. The survey captures key indicators of social background as well as journalistic role perceptions among early-career journalists, thereby enabling an examination of the relationship between social origin and professional self-understanding.

The results show that the majority of respondents come from academic family backgrounds. The analysis of role perceptions reveals a high degree of consensus across social backgrounds with regard to central professional roles. Critical watchdog functions and informational, intermediary, and analytical tasks are prioritised across groups and constitute a shared core understanding of journalistic work. At the same time, the findings indicate that social background has a relevant influence particularly with regard to interventionist role perceptions. Respondents from lower and middle social backgrounds assign greater importance to advocatory and interventionist tasks, understanding journalism more strongly as a means of social participation or support for marginalised groups. In contrast, respondents from higher social backgrounds place greater emphasis on journalism's traditional control function vis-à-vis political and economic elites.

JOS32 Young Producers and Consumers

PP 1014 "Otherwise you'd go crazy": Eco anxiety, psychological stress and mental health needs in climate journalism

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Climate journalists play a crucial role in mediating knowledge about the climate crisis and its societal consequences. While their work is essential for public awareness and democratic decision-making, the psychological stress associated with engagement with an existential global crisis has received little systematic scholarly attention. This study addresses this research gap by examining work-related stress factors, climate-related emotions, coping strategies, and desired forms of support among climate journalists.

Drawing on the stress–strain concept from occupational psychology (Poppelreuter & Mierke, 2012), the study conceptualises journalistic stress as the result of interpersonal and personal stressors interacting with available resources and coping mechanisms. In addition, theoretical approaches from environmental psychology are integrated, particularly research on climate emotions (Pihkala, 2022b) and eco-anxiety (Clayton et al., 2017), as well as transactional coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Pihkala's process model of eco-anxiety and eco-grief (Pihkala, 2022a) serves as a sensitising framework for analysing adaptive and maladaptive coping patterns in the context of long-term climate reporting.

Empirically, the study is based on 20 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with German-speaking climate journalists from different media genres (print, online, radio, television, and social media) and employment types (staff and freelance). The interviews were analysed using qualitative content analysis, with a category system derived deductively from existing literature and inductively from the material.

The findings show that climate journalists experience multiple, overlapping stress factors. In addition to the emotional burden of reporting on climate change impacts and human suffering—comparable to indirect exposure to climate-related stressors described in previous research (Doherty & Clayton, 2011; Fritze et al., 2008)—participants report stress arising from conflicts within editorial offices, accusations of activism, time pressure, limited resources, and hostile audience reactions such as online harassment. These stressors reflect both general occupational risks of journalism (Loosen et al., 2023; Beiler & Stascheit, 2017) and climate-specific challenges, including perceived inadequacy of political action and lobbying against climate protection.

Regarding emotional responses, interviewees describe a broad spectrum of climate emotions (Pihkala, 2022b), including fear and worry, anger and frustration, but also hope. While symptoms resembling climate anxiety are present, they are mostly articulated as functional emotional responses rather than clinical impairments, aligning with research that conceptualises climate anxiety as potentially adaptive (Clayton, 2020; Whitmarsh et al., 2022).

Nine coping strategies were identified. Six are classified as adaptive, including self-efficacy through journalistic work, a focus on constructive or solutions-oriented reporting, social support, self-care through time-outs, knowledge acquisition, and

humour. Three strategies are considered maladaptive: emotional distancing through rationalisation, avoidance, and repression through continuous work. These patterns resonate with prior findings on coping in climate-related professions (Head & Harada, 2017; Ágoston et al., 2022).

Finally, the study reveals a lack of institutional support for climate journalists' mental health. Participants express a desire for recognition of psychological strain by editorial offices and for preventive structures such as counselling or peer support. Overall, the findings highlight the resilience and the vulnerability of climate journalists and underline the need to integrate mental health considerations into newsroom practices and journalism research.

JOS32 Young Producers and Consumers

PP 1015 Strong traditions and new trends: Nordic journalism students in changing times

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The Nordic countries are historically considered "most similar systems" (Miles 1996) because of their strong political, cultural and societal ties. Similarities are also evident in their media systems (Hallin & Mancini 2004; Brüggemann et al. 2015; Syvertsen et al. 2014; Humprecht et al. 2022), journalists' views (Ahva et al. 2017), and journalism education (Hovden et al. 2016).

Upon a closer Nordic inspection, many (emerging) differences have been found at a systemic level (e.g., Ohlsson 2015; Ala-Fossi, 2020) and among individual journalists (Hovden & Väliverronen 2021) during a period of notable changes in journalism. One group where the potential impact of changes has received less attention is journalism students. Their views were extensively gauged in the Nordics in three waves of studies in 2005–2012, and findings indicated a shared and increasingly similar professional orientation (Hovden et al. 2016). Since then, observations have only been made nationally (e.g., Mäenpää & Ahva 2017 for Finland).

To observe recent developments, we conducted the fourth wave of the Nordic Journalism Students survey in autumn 2025. Our data consist of 1,741 responses from journalism students based in 27 J-schools in all five Nordic nation-states, and Greenland. We investigated journalism students' views on journalism, the education they had received, their future aspirations in journalism, their backgrounds and their media use. In this presentation, we will focus on their role perceptions and future aspirations.

Early results indicate that Nordic students' role perceptions have remained quite stable. Following earlier research (Hovden et al. 2016), investigative, monitoring, and reporting roles garner notable support. The least important roles, related to financial considerations and political agenda-setting, highlight students' ongoing support for the Nordic traditions of autonomy and neutral reporting (Ahva et al. 2017). In a more recent trend, students are also highly willing to stimulate new ideas and promote public debate. Alongside the largely shared orientation, there are notable regional differences as well, with Greenland particularly standing out.

Another key finding shows a notable decline in the proportion of Nordic students who are (fairly) certain that they want to work as journalists (from 73% in 2012 to 65% in 2025). At the same time and much like before (Hovden et al. 2016), students prioritise studying practical and profession-oriented skills, such as interviewing and source criticism, while subjects like media history, public administration and communication theory are less popular. This raises concern about the profession's long-term resilience. Uncertainty about a journalistic career is by far strongest among Icelandic students, and considerable in Finland, countries where media organisations have been particularly affected by financial pressures.

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JOS32 Young Producers and Consumers

PP 1016 Real-time emotions in response to digital news: Effects of format, exposure sequence, and media literacy on youth civic engagement

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This paper presents the final results of an interdisciplinary study (conducted by researchers in Communication, Political Science, Education, and Artificial Intelligence) that examines how young Europeans emotionally experience political information in digital environments, with particular attention to the role of format, exposure sequence, and prior ideological orientations. The research addresses three core challenges for communication in Europe: (1) the affective disengagement and low levels of political involvement among young people; (2) the growing influence of digital platforms and their algorithmic architectures in shaping public emotions; and (3) the need to rethink media literacy from a perspective that integrates both cognition and affect.

Young Europeans interact with political information predominantly through digital platforms, where their exposure to news is often incidental, emotionally saturated, and strongly conditioned by algorithmic design. However, there is still limited academic evidence regarding **how young people emotionally experience such exposures,** how these emotions influence their civic motivation, and what role format and digital consumption routines play in this process.

To address this gap, the research team conducted a controlled experiment in which 289 students were exposed to political news content presented in multiple formats and sequences. Emotional responses were assessed through self-report measures (I-PANAS-SF, SAM) and automated facial-expression analysis using the Kopernica tool. The study was complemented by a preliminary survey that gathered information habits, media trust, and ideological positioning, which enabled a more contextualised interpretation of the experimental findings.

The results reveal a clear predominance of negative emotions in response to political news—particularly frustration, shame, and confusion—while positive emotions (such as pride, calm, or joy) appeared only marginally. The TikTok-style audiovisual format increased interest and emotional activation but also elevated frustration compared with traditional text-based news. Exposure sequence also played a significant role: viewing the video first and then reading the text reduced frustration and enhanced participants' affective connection with the content. No robust ideological patterns emerged, owing to the low representation of conservative participants, although the data did suggest that ideological affinity may modulate emotional valence.

These results open an important debate for the research community: how can the emotional connection between young people and the public sphere be rebuilt in a platform-mediated ecosystem that amplifies affective signals? The study provides empirical evidence to inform media-literacy interventions directed not only at strengthening critical thinking but also at enhancing emotional regulation in digital environments. This, in turn, requires rethinking what "civic engagement" means in environments shaped by algorithmic systems, and considering how educational strategies might help emotionally reconnect young people with political life.

Overall, the study advances scientific understanding by offering an empirical approach grounded in real-time emotional measurement; by analysing formats, platforms, algorithms, and affective responses in an integrated manner; by proposing intervention models that address the links between emotions, information consumption, and democratic engagement; and by opening new avenues for investigating how platform design shapes political attitudes.

JOS33 Journalistic Work II.

PP 1017 The spatial reconfiguration of journalistic labour and alienation

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This article examines how remote work settings, particularly working from home, reshape the labour conditions of UK local journalists and transform the experience of alienation within contemporary capitalism. While flexible work models expanded rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study offers original qualitative evidence showing how these arrangements reconfigure journalistic labour by spatially relocating production into the domestic sphere. Drawing on Marx's (2011) theory of alienation and 26 in-depth interviews, the article demonstrates that journalists' homes are not merely alternative workplaces but active sites of capitalist production where domestic objects (e.g., dining tables, sofas, or beds) and private spaces (such as kitchens, living rooms, or bedrooms) acquire new functional and economic roles. This spatial restructuring produces a distinctive form of alienation: journalists become estranged not only from their labour and living spaces but also from their identities as both workers and family members.

The findings show that these forms of domestic alienation have direct and corrosive effects on journalistic practice. The spatial relocation of news production into the home, combined with the dissolution of temporal boundaries between work

and non-work, generates conditions of constant availability in which journalists experience themselves as perpetually "on alert". This mode of labour intensification accelerates news production and fragments journalistic workflows, encouraging reactive and episodic reporting over sustained inquiry. As domestic spaces are continuously repurposed for production, opportunities for editorial reflection, collaborative deliberation, and investigative depth are structurally diminished. Moreover, the erosion of boundaries between professional and personal identities weakens journalists' capacity to uphold occupational norms orientated toward public service, instead fostering compliance driven by insecurity with platform metrics and managerial expectations. The result is an increasingly homogenised and low-quality local news output, marked by superficiality and diminished democratic value. By tracing how alienation rooted in the domestication of labour reshapes journalistic time, space, and subjectivity, this article demonstrates that remote work does not merely relocate journalism but actively reconstitutes its epistemic practices, professional values, and institutional capacity to serve local publics.

Keywords

Journalism, Remote Work, Flexible Labour, Precarity, Alienation

JOS33 Journalistic Work II.

PP 1018 The (re)configurations of Portuguese local journalism in the context of platformization

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As the structures and logics of digital platforms reshape economic sectors and social life, journalism is challenged to adapt to the production and circulation of news in the context of platformization (Dijck et al., 2018), described by the authors as the process through which the structures, business models, and forms of governance of digital platforms penetrate economic sectors and spheres of life, challenging the role of the media in the public sphere and in the audience attention market. The authors identify three dimensions through which the phenomenon affects media activity. For the present study, two of them are relevant: adaptations of journalistic practices and values; and the implications of the governance (affordances) of digital social platforms on the circulation of information. From an administrative perspective, it is necessary for media organizations to understand and adapt to platform logics in order to achieve greater relevance in this environment (Ferrer-Conill & Tandoc, 2018; Ferrucci et al., 2020; Jenkins et al., 2015). However, a critical reading indicates that platforms control interactions, data collection, views, advertisers, and billing, generating dependence and subordination (Poell et al., 2020). In this scenario, local journalism is at a serious disadvantage (Schulz, 2021), due to factors such as the lack of staff and resources to manage platforms and low numbers of followers and interactions, since media outlets with low relevance are sidelined in favor of large media organizations (Toff & Mathews, 2021; T. Vos & Heinderyckx, 2016). In addition to these difficulties, in Portugal, local journalism is undergoing a slow transition from print to online (Jerónimo, 2015; Noronha, 2020b). This communication proposal aims to present the results of research on how platformization has (re)configured local journalism in Portugal in the two dimensions mentioned above. Based on this question, the study had the following specific objectives: a) to identify how local journalism in the Central Region of Portugal has been (re)configured in its professional practices and values through the use of Facebook profiles to circulate its news; b) to investigate the challenges and strategies of local media in adapting to the logics and limitations of the governance norms (affordances) of the Facebook and Google platforms. To address the first objective, a content analysis is conducted based on news published on the Facebook profiles of 20 media outlets in the Central Region of Portugal, between 01/11/25 and 30/04/26, in order to analyze the influence of metrics on content production by identifying, for example, the use of clickbait, the republication of news, and churnalism (Van Leuven, 2019). For the second objective, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 20 editors responsible for managing digital platforms, to identify their perceptions regarding content performance on social networks, as well as the effects on financial results and the business model. A predominance of the reproduction of content from media websites on Facebook profiles is expected and, in part, the use of resources to influence metrics, as well as evidence of the difficulties faced by local media in producing metrics capable of generating revenue. but with successful exemples.

JOS33 Journalistic Work II.

PP 1019 Journalists' political role conceptions in the face of democratic backsliding: A Pan-European approach

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With the worldwide rise of authoritarianism (Boese et. al., 2022; Repucci & Slipowitz, 2023), the question to what extent journalism is effected by threats to democracy, can counter, or, to the contrary, may support them, has become an urgent concern (Johnson & Veenstra, 2024). Scholars argued that journalists can strengthen citizen's resilience against democratic backsliding by helping to inform citizens about political processes (Kaftan & Gessler, 2025). However, other studies showed that journalists can also foster the erosion of democracy if they focus on representing and amplifying grievances and disaffection with democratic processes (McDevitt, 2022). In this context, Europe is of particular interest as recent years have witnessed increasing democratic backsliding across the continent, threatening its democratic tradition (Norris, 2017). Although mostly identified in Eastern and Central Europe (e.g. Castaldo & Memoli 2024; Cianetti et al., 2018; Lorenz & Anders, 2021), a rise in anti-democratic trends has also been observed in Western European countries such as the United Kingdom (Blick, 2024) and Italy (Coletti, 2025). Democratic backsliding has become a pan-European concern (Oleart & Theuns, 2023).

Our paper analyses how journalists across Europe perceive their political role in the context of rising democratic backsliding and illiberal democracies. We draw on a large data set of surveys with journalists in 26 countries across Eastern, Central, and Western Europe (N = 13,098). The surveys were fielded between 2021 and 2024 as part of an international research project in which the authors of this study participate.

Our paper asks how journalists' political role conceptions differ across Europe (RQ1); whether the degree of perceived press freedom and of state repression against journalists effect journalists' political role conceptions across Europe (RQ2); and whether the degree of media freedom and of democracy as measured by independent organisations effect how journalists across Europe perceive their political roles (RQ3).

We draw on 24 survey items pertaining to journalists' professional role conceptions that cluster into four politically relevant milieus (cf. Hanitzsch, 2011): informers and analysts; critical advocates; interventionists; and loyalists. To assess the political context and specifically the state of democracy within which journalists work, we use a number of measures. First, we draw on an item from our survey to measure journalists' perceived media freedom. Second, we assess whether authorities in the respective country engaged in surveillance and/or blocking of critical and investigative journalists, drawing on a questionnaire answered by the researchers conducting the surveys in each country. Third, we use data from Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index and from the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index to measure the degree of media freedom and democracy journalists encounter in each country. To evaluate the effect of different degrees of media freedom and of democracy on journalists' political role conceptions across our 26 we apply multilevel linear regression analysis with random intercepts.

Our pan-European approach, including countries from East to West, runs counter most existing research in journalism studies that focusses either on Eastern or on Western Europe, and thus aims to overcome the still prevailing cold-war divide (Peruško et al., 2021).

JOS33 Journalistic Work II.

PP 1020 Identity work in regional journalism: A print–digital comparison

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Research on traditional regional and local media frequently discusses these outlets as representational actors that mirror pre-existing territorial identities. In parallel, their digital transformation is often assumed to strengthen participatory capacities and processes of identity construction. This paper complements both assumptions by shifting analytical attention from representation to the everyday organizational, discursive, and visual practices through which regional belonging is produced, by approaching regional media as identity infrastructures.

The paper is based on a comparative analysis of selected regional newspapers and regional online platforms in Slovenia and Croatia, analysed over comparable publication periods. It asks how regional identity is constructed across print and digital formats and where infrastructural identity work becomes uneven. The analysis combines quantitative content analysis and

multimodal analysis, supplemented by contextual information on ownership structures and editorial routines obtained through interviews. Identity construction is examined through patterns of thematic organization, voice, and visual structuring of regional belonging across print and digital formats.

The findings reveal print-digital asymmetries in the ways regional journalism and its media formats perform identity work. Regional newspapers continue to sustain relatively coherent forms of identity construction through stable sectioning, repetitive symbolic geographies, and visually anchored narratives. Online regional media in both countries, by contrast, exhibit a more fragmented mode of identity construction. While print editions reproduce regional belonging as a cumulative, continuous process, identity-related content on online platforms is dispersed across news flows and shaped by immediacy-driven publishing logic. Additionally, platform-specific affordances for participatory and multimodal identity work are only partially realized in everyday regional news production. These differences are interpreted as being associated with temporal and organizational constraints of digital news production rather than with editorial intention. The observed patterns appear consistent in both countries, suggesting structural rather than culturally specific dynamics.

By identifying key practices of identity work in Slovenian and Croatian regional media and isolating print-digital asymmetries, this paper contributes to the debates in journalism studies on platformization and journalism's societal roles. It argues that, alongside economic and organizational pressures, regional journalism also faces challenges related to its meaning-making role, shaping how regions are held together and reproduced in today's media systems.

JOS33 Journalistic Work II.

PP 1021 (Changing journalistic frameworks) Competing institutional logics in data journalism

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The growing availability of open data and digital tools has introduced new forms of work into newsrooms, challenging established journalistic values, norms, and routines. It also raises fundamental questions about the nature of journalism. As a hybrid practice situated at the intersection of journalism, programming, data analysis, and visualization, data journalism constitutes a particularly fertile site for examining how competing institutional logics are negotiated in everyday editorial work.

Building on institutional logics theory (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), this study conceptualizes data journalism as an arena in which multiple institutional logics coexist and are actively negotiated. It asks: (1) Which institutional logics structure data journalism practices in contemporary newsrooms? (2) How are tensions between these logics negotiated and stabilized through everyday editorial practices?

The analysis identifies four central institutional logics—professional journalistic, quantitative, hacker, and visual design logics—and examines how these are translated and combined in practice. These logics are carried and translated by individuals through practices, underlying norms, and legitimizing arguments.

The study draws on in-depth interviews with 20 data journalists, editors, designers, and data analysts in Poland, Estonia, and Latvia, supplemented by reconstructive interviews based on concrete data journalism projects. All data have been collected and are analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019).

The findings show that data journalism does not replace established journalistic logics but reconfigures them through selective integration of external logics. While journalistic objectivity and verification remain core ideals, they are reformulated through quantitative ideals of methodological rigor, hacker norms of openness and collaboration, and visual logics emphasizing accessibility and audience engagement.

This study contributes to journalism research by offering a theoretical model of how various professional logics interact within data journalism. Additionally, the study provides new empirical insights into data journalism practices in Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords

data journalism; institutional logics; hybrid journalism

JOS34 Beat Journalism

PP 1034 Economic knowledge, journalistic knowhow and the expertise(s) of financial journalists

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The study examines the expertise of economic reporters and commentators and how they assess and address the epistemic challenges of daily newswork. It applies a novel theoretical framework – the *Journalistic Content Knowledge* (JCK) framework (Reich & Lahav, 2021) – and a new research method, *News Sorting*.

The JCK conceptualizes journalists as experts not in economics itself, but in reporting on economics, integrating domain-specific knowledge with journalistic expertise. To capture this integration in practice, the study asked 20 leading economic journalists to rank samples of their recent publications (N = 500 items), first according to economic challenges and then according to journalistic challenges. The ranking was followed by in-depth interviews during which participants reflected on their decisions, reconstructed the challenges they faced, and described the practices they used to address them. This mixed-methods design enables a detailed analysis of how economic journalists experience, evaluate, and manage epistemic challenges in concrete production situations drawn from their own work.

The study reveals how the interplay between economic knowledge and journalistic judgment unfolds in specific items, identifies key challenges in economic reporting, and shows that economic reporters can be characterized by three distinct professional and epistemic orientations.

Findings show that journalists consider economic challenges more demanding than journalistic ones, highlighting the significant epistemic weight of the beat. Economic and journalistic challenges were moderately correlated (Pearson $r = 0.473$, $p < .001$), indicating ongoing interaction between them. This interaction is especially evident under two contrasting conditions: highly challenging stories that require planning, initiative, and creative adaptation to formats and genres, and highly routinized stories, such as press releases and official announcements, where economic and journalistic knowledge merge into a form of "news subsidy." In most cases (N = 381 items), journalists applied economic and journalistic knowledge intuitively and automatically, while finding it difficult to articulate or separate these forms of knowledge, underscoring the role of tacit knowledge (Collins, 2010) grounded in experience.

The study also identifies three recurring epistemic orientations through which expertise is enacted: discovery and gathering, analysis and interpretation, and presentation and accessibility. These orientations shape journalists' practices and allocation of resources, and are more closely related to media type, genre, and format than to formal role definitions or organizational hierarchies.

Findings suggest that although economic journalists are not economists and their subject-matter expertise varies, some demonstrate high levels of professional expertise by effectively integrating economic and journalistic knowledge.

While this study deliberately shifts attention from external evaluations of economic literacy to how expertise is enacted in practice, this analytical focus does not directly assess journalists' formal economic knowledge. Therefore, the findings should be understood as offering a complementary perspective on journalistic expertise rather than refuting claims about gaps in economic knowledge among journalists.

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JOS34 Beat Journalism

PP 1035 How news beats shape Nordic journalists' ideals and perceived influences

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News beats have long structured journalistic work by organising newsroom divisions of labour and shaping professional roles, expertise, and autonomy (Margin & Maurer, 2019; Reich & Lahav, 2020; Reich, Jackman & Blum, 2021; Reich & Lahav, 2021). Yet, in a time where journalism is facing economic, technological, and social challenges, the role of news beats and beat journalists is reconfigured. News beats increasingly operate under conditions in which their relevance, resources, and legitimacy must be actively negotiated. Against competing arguments that beats have become less important versus claims that they have merely been transformed, beat journalists' own perceptions of their role become a crucial lens for understanding how beat journalism is being reshaped. Comparative research from the Worlds of Journalism Study demonstrates that journalistic role orientations and perceived autonomy vary systematically across contexts, indicating that specialisation continues to structure journalistic practice (Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Hanitzsch & Basyouni Hamada et al., 2025).

Situated within ongoing debates on professional role orientations, journalists' perceived influence, and the future of beat reporting, this chapter draws on survey data from the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS3) from the Nordic countries (N = 2585) to address two research questions. RQ1: To what extent does news beat specialisation shape journalists' professional role orientations and perceived influence in the Nordic media context? RQ2: How do specialised beats—politics, culture, and sports—differ from generalist journalists in terms of professional role orientations and perceived influence?

Using cross-table analysis with tests of significance, the findings reveal persistent and systematic beat-related differences. Political journalists remain strongly oriented toward watchdog and public-affairs ideals; cultural journalists emphasise interpretive and educational roles; and sports journalists combine professional detachment with pronounced audience-oriented and entertainment logics. By demonstrating that news beats continue to function as distinct professional

micro-cultures—even as they must actively justify their relevance within increasingly metric-driven and flexible newsroom environments—this chapter contributes to debates on journalistic specialisation in three ways. First, it challenge assumptions that beats are either stable or in decline by showing that their persistence is contingent on ongoing professional negotiation. Second, it extends Worlds of Journalism research by foregrounding beat affiliation as a key axis of differentiation in journalists' ideals and perceived autonomy. Third, it provides regionally grounded evidence that professional differentiation remains resilient, but increasingly contested, in contemporary journalism.

Key words

beat journalism, role orientations, specialisation, Nordic

JOS34 Beat Journalism

PP 1036 Cracks in the mirror of truth: The contradictory epistemological beliefs and claims to journalistic truth in and between news beats

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The epistemic authority of contemporary journalism has been founded upon the normative role of a truth-teller. However, this epistemic role has been challenged in many Western democracies not only by emerging actors online but also by professional journalists who increasingly distance themselves from the objectivity ideal—the proxy concept of journalistic truth (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019; Muñoz-Torres, 2012). The epistemic contestations over journalism's legitimacy and observations on the plurality of epistemological beliefs within professional journalism have led to calls to re-examine the scholarship on professional journalists' epistemological beliefs beyond traditional subjectivity/objectivity dichotomies and to assess the more fundamental philosophical traditions behind journalism's epistemological concepts (e.g. Godler & Reich, 2013; Hearns-Branaman, 2016). Despite these calls having attracted some qualitative research on journalists' epistemological beliefs beyond conceptions of objectivity and facts, the study of journalists' epistemological beliefs and conceptions of truth, encompassing both epistemological (i.e. how journalism knows) and ontological dimensions (i.e. of what is journalism writing about; what journalism can know about the world), remains scarce and limited to Anglo-American contexts (e.g. Hearns-Branaman, 2016).

This paper contributes to this line of qualitative scholarship by interviewing 33 Finnish professional journalists representing five news beats (business/economy, culture, editorial, politics, and sports) on their epistemological beliefs and analysing their claims to truth through post-foundational discourse analysis. The interviewees' claims to journalistic truth are scrutinised in light of four philosophies that each adopt a specific stance in relation to epistemological realism/relativism and ontological realism/relativism: (absolute) realism, anti-realism, critical realism, and pragmatism (Ekström & Westlund, 2019; Hearns-Branaman, 2016).

The results show that truth is still considered a viable concept for journalism, yet there are perceptible differences in claims to truth between the news beats as well as male and female journalists. The findings reveal that especially male journalists covering business/economy, politics and sports are more likely to argue for the ontological realist core of journalism and demarcate their beats from others by deploying epistemological realist arguments with indications of absolute realist philosophies and correspondence theory of truth (e.g. renouncing the need to interpret events before reporting about them).

I argue that such claims driven by epistemological realism impose untenable normative expectations that degrade the institution's epistemic authority when journalism fails to "mirror" external reality as such. Overcoming such discrepancies would require educating professional journalists on questions of epistemology and ontology and providing them with argumentative tools to partake in online metadiscourses about the veracity of journalism where journalists' interpretations and value judgments over bits of knowledge and facts are framed as forms of antirealism (Figenschou & Ihlebæk, 2019).

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JOS34 Beat Journalism

PP 1037 How much is "enough"? Mapping the desired knowledge of economic journalists

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Economic journalism plays a central role in conveying essential information that shapes citizens' understanding of economic processes and their outcomes (van Dalen, de Vreese, & Albæk, 2015; Strauß, 2018). However, while scholars agree quite unanimously that economic journalists lack sufficient knowledge of economics (Damstra, Boukes & Vliegenthart, 2018; Knowles, Phillips & Lidberg, 2017; Doyle, 2006; Manning, 2013; Mullen, 2018; Schifferes & Coulter, 2012; Tambini, 2010; Thompson, 2013), there was never systematic effort to define what may count as "sufficient".

The current study maps for the first time the expected knowledge of economic journalists, using in-depth interviews with 30 people, half of whom are economic experts (academics and senior officials) and half senior economic reporters and commentators from leading Israeli national news outlets. To elicit a detailed and nuanced map of desired knowledge, participants were asked one central question: suppose that there was a special school for economic reporters and commentators, how would its curriculum look? This approach has already shown its fecundity in mapping the desired knowledge in another news beat (author 1 & author 2, 2025).

Interestingly, both journalists and experts agreed on the core of economic knowledge that economic journalists are expected to master, yielding a curriculum of more than one hundred knowledge items. However they differed substantially on the status, depth, priorities, functions and epistemic purpose of this knowledge. According to the economists the primary challenge of economic reporting isn't knowledge, rather understanding who are the 'real' experts to rely on.

The epistemic gaps between journalists and economic experts manifest in three dimensions:

I. **Knowledge purpose and function:** While economic experts conceptualize economic knowledge as an intrinsic intellectual pursuit aimed at understanding, economic journalists see this knowledge as a practical tool for minimizing error, ensuring narrative accuracy, and effectively popularizing complex information for lay audiences, prioritizing practical know-how essential for turning economic information into newsworthy stories.
2. **Knowledge scope:** While economists prioritized depth and multi-layered, interconnected comprehension of economic phenomena, economic journalists emphasized knowledge breadth and capacity to process information promptly.
3. **Epistemic authority:** While the authority of economic experts stems from personal mastery of disciplinary knowledge and credentials, journalists see themselves as part of a distributed epistemic framework (Eyal, 2019), skilfully combining the contributions of external experts (economists, analysts, officials) with their own procedural expertise in locating, processing and disseminating economic information.

Bridging these gaps is achievable thanks to both parties' shared commitment to accurate economic reporting. To succeed, they must acknowledge being part of the same "epistemic community." On one hand, economists should adopt a less dismissive approach toward journalists' competences, recognizing their unique capacity for knowledge mediation, and actively help popularize abstract economic phenomena without sacrificing accuracy. On the other hand, journalists must acknowledge their own epistemic limitations and cultivate a deeper curiosity toward economic theory and its contribution to in-depth news reporting.

JOS34 Beat Journalism

PP 1038 Hybridising Swedish sports journalism: Between professional and alternative ideals in supporter-produced journalism

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Supporter-produced sports journalism has become an increasingly visible component of contemporary sports media, yet its position in relation to professional journalism remains theoretically and empirically underexplored. This paper addresses that gap by examining supporter journalism through the lens of hybridity, asking how professional and alternative journalistic attributes are articulated in supporter-produced texts in comparison with legacy media. Focusing on the Swedish context, the study investigates SvenskaFans, one of Sweden's largest supporter-driven sports media platforms, and compares its football coverage with that of two leading national newspapers, Dagens Nyheter and Aftonbladet.

Drawing on theories of hybridity, alternative media, and genre, the study conceptualises supporter journalism as situated within a hybrid media environment where professional and participatory logics intersect. The operationalisation of hybridity is inspired by a three-level framework (textual, system, and discursive), while alternative media are understood relationally in tension with mainstream journalism rather than as a fully oppositional category. Genre theory is employed to examine how journalistic forms, styles, and narrative conventions are negotiated.

Methodologically, the paper employs a quantitative content analysis of 474 text-based articles published in 2021. The sample consists of football-related coverage from SvenskaFans, Dagens Nyheter, and Aftonbladet, limited to the top division for

men (Allsvenskan). The analysis compares the outlets across five dimensions: genre, main topic, actors, textual style, and counter-hegemonic attributes. These dimensions allow for a systematic assessment of both convergence and distinction between supporter-produced and professional sports journalism.

The findings show that SvenskaFans largely adopts recognisable journalistic genres and professional conventions indicating a substantial degree of professionalization. Matchday coverage dominates across all outlets, and supporter journalism frequently relies on original reporting rather than reproducing legacy media content. At the same time, SvenskaFans displays distinctive characteristics: a greater mix of subjective genres (such as columns and analyses), a stronger presence of editorial contributors as narrative actors, and a more personal, interpretive, and positively framed writing style. While counter-hegemonic attributes associated with fanzine culture, such as subcultural references and humour, are present, but they do not dominate the overall content. Taken together, the results suggest that supporter journalism occupies an ambiguous position between alternative and professional media. Rather than representing a symmetrical hybridisation, the relationship appears asymmetrical: supporter journalism increasingly resembles professional journalism, while legacy media show limited influence from supporter-based practices.

By demonstrating both convergence and enduring distinctions, the study contributes to ongoing debates about hybridity, professional boundaries, and normativity in journalism studies. Rather than treating hybridity as a descriptive endpoint, the findings suggest the need to conceptualise supporter-produced journalism as occupying an unstable and asymmetrical position within the hybrid media system. This has broader implications for how journalism research understands emerging actors who simultaneously challenge, reproduce, and are absorbed by professional journalistic norms.

JOS35 Journalistic Content III.

PP 1119 Measuring framing using large language models: Evidence from refugee reporting

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Framing is a central concept in journalism research, used to understand how news conveys meaning, organizes interpretation, and guides public judgment (Entman, 1993; Scheufele, 1999). However, research has largely treated framing as relatively static, and measured it cross-sectionally or over only short time periods (Matthes, 2012). While scholars increasingly emphasize the dynamic nature of framing (Deprez & Raeymaeckers, 2010; Gottlieb, 2015; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Shih et al., 2008), the measurement of framing dynamics at scale remains methodologically underdeveloped.

Existing approaches can be grouped into three categories: Manual coding is the most valid approach, but infeasible for long time spans and large corpora. Traditional automated tools with dictionary approaches, in contrast, allow the analysis of framing over longer time periods yet with a weak construct validity. More sophisticated methods, centrally topic modeling, have been used as a pragmatic compromise, allowing longitudinal analyses at scale, although often requiring additional interpretive steps to align topics with theoretically defined frames (Heidenreich et al., 2019; Hoffmann & Hameleers, 2024).

Recent advances in large language models offer new possibilities for theory-guided automated content analysis, yet their application to framing research remains underdeveloped and insufficiently validated so far. This paper introduces a transparent, theory-driven LLM-based workflow for automated framing analysis. We contribute methodologically by translating Entman's frame elements into explicit, machine-readable coding rules and by proposing a multi-stage validation procedure that ensures interpretability and sustained human control, including manual pretesting, the construction of a human-coded gold standard dataset, prompt calibration and scaling. This framework provides clear analytical potential by enabling the systematic measurement of frame variance, dominance, and stabilization over time. Importantly, this workflow treats LLMs as constrained analytical tools within a human-supervised validation process rather than autonomous classifiers.

Longitudinal framing research requires consistent frame decisions across changing vocabularies, actors, and events, which poses challenges for both manual coding and traditional automated methods. We argue that LLMs, when constrained by theory-driven prompts and deterministic settings, are particularly well suited to capture such temporal variation while maintaining conceptual consistency. Against this background, we illustrate the analytical potential of the approach using refugee framing as an empirical example: with a dataset of N = 73,000 newspaper articles, we compare the framing of two contexts (Syrian/Ukrainian refugees) in four countries (Germany, UK, Switzerland, Spain) in three languages (German, English, Spanish), with eight theoretically grounded frames.

Methodologically, we finetune prompt design with few-shot examples and deterministic settings for LLMs, specifically the GPT-4.1 API, to output structured JSON data with information on frame decision, detected frame elements, textual evidence and confidence scores without model retraining. This approach is tailored to provide interpretability, replicability and portability to other issues.

This paper contributes to journalism research by offering a replicable framework for longitudinal framing analysis. It demonstrates how large language models can be integrated into established framing theory with conceptual rigor, while enabling analyses at a temporal and comparative scale that remains difficult to achieve with established manual and dictionary- or topic-based approaches.

JOS35 Journalistic Content III.

PP 1120 Framing corruption: A cross-country analysis of media coverage on political corruption in varying media systems

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This paper adopts a cross-national comparative two-study design to investigate how news media in Bulgaria, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom frame political corruption. These countries vary both in their media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and in their perceived levels of corruption. By analyzing news coverage from 2018 to 2024, we account for variation over time. The study proceeds in two stages: (1) a qualitative content analysis (N = 124) to inductively conceptualize frames of political corruption, resulting in a comprehensive taxonomy, and (2) a quantitative content analysis (N = 1000) applying this taxonomy to measure frame prevalence across countries, and to explain variation through contextual factors, such as press freedom and institutional trust, via multilevel modeling.

Study 1 identified seven distinct issue-specific frames of political corruption. These frames range from those highlighting the root causes of corruption (individual and systemic) to those emphasizing responses and reforms. These seven issue-specific frames were conceptually grouped into three higher-order meta-frames, which capture how news media construct different interpretations of corruption and make the issue visible and meaningful to the public.

Study 2 assessed the prevalence of corruption frames across the selected countries and time periods, demonstrating substantial cross-national variation. The *Elite and Foreign Power Abuse* meta-frame is most dominant across all countries, whilst the *Push for Reform* meta-frame is least common. The *Systematic Institutional Failure* meta-frame is widespread but less so in Italy, and it remains the most stable over time. Moreover, lower institutional trust is associated with a higher prevalence of the *Elite and Foreign Power Abuse* meta-frame, whereas more press freedom is associated with a higher prevalence of the *Push for Reform* meta-frame.

Overall, news media frame political corruption predominantly as either systemic failure or individual wrongdoing, consistent with previous research (Berti, 2019). We extend this literature by demonstrating that corruption is also framed through calls for collective action and reform. While these patterns reflect the structural characteristics of media systems, our findings indicate that contextual factors, specifically press freedom and institutional trust, also shape how corruption is framed across countries. These findings highlight the importance of context in the news media's representation of political corruption.

This study is the first to develop a comprehensive, inductively derived taxonomy of political corruption frames relevant to various European media systems. Unlike previous research that focused on individual framing elements, this study reconstructs full frame packages, providing a more integrated picture of how political corruption is portrayed in the news media. It contributes substantially to understanding cross-national differences in media framing through a quantitative lens.

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JOS35 Journalistic Content III.

PP 1121 Tracing the copy-paste: News diversity in a small journalism system between homogenization and pluralization

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Contemporary journalism is being re-grounded by a converging set of structural pressures: democratic backsliding that (re)politicizes information flows, intensified media ownership concentration that constrains editorial autonomy, and digitally accelerated news production cycles that reward speed, routinization, and standardization over verification and contextualization (e.g. McChesney, 2016; Pickard, 2020; Golding and Murdock, 2022). Building on the political economy of communication and media sociology, this study explores how structural conditions generate news homogenization despite institutional pluralism, treating news diversity as a struggle over visibility, representation, and infrastructural power.

While pluralization is normatively associated with the articulation of heterogeneous interests, actors, and voices, homogenization emerges through shared infrastructures, dependence on news agencies and information subsidies, metricized routines, and source hierarchies that systematically privilege institutionally central actors—sometimes to an extent described as "excessive similarity" (van Cuilenburg, 1999). These processes are not mutually exclusive but paradoxically co-constitutive: an abundance of outlets can still coincide with narrowed agendas and voices, creating an illusion of

diversity rooted in market multiplicity rather than substantive difference (e.g., Karppinen, 2018; Nechustain, Zamith, and Lewis, 2023). Slovenia, a small, interdependent post-socialist media environment marked by "political commercialism" (Splichal, 1995) and platform-driven reconfiguration of news production alongside a decline of journalistic authority (Vobič, 2025), is approached not as an exceptional case but as a theoretically informative one. Small markets render structural dependencies easier to observe, even though the same mechanisms operate elsewhere with varying intensity.

The study draws on 13,207 news items from 141 news media outlets, collected with banded temporal sampling design to capture routine production. Methodologically, it combines detection of verbatim text reuse based on ≥10-word n-gram overlap with semi-automated extraction of cited sources using large language models. To avoid black box inference, we pair automation with manual checks and conservative thresholds, and report uncertainty- so that computational outputs support, rather than substitute for, interpretive judgment.

The findings reveal a paradox in which a multiplicity of outlets masks high levels of content homogenization. Approximately one quarter of all news items are directly or indirectly dependent on the national news agency, with additional homogenization arising through ownership concentration, regional proximity, and ideological alignment. International news is especially affected: fewer than one third of foreign-affairs articles explicitly cite foreign media or agency sources, and where attribution exists it is highly concentrated around a narrow core of Western agencies (AFP, dpa, Reuters). Across media groups, institutional political actors dominate source visibility, while civil society and peripheral actors remain marginal.

The paper contributes by reframing news diversity as a question of infrastructural power rather than ideological balance, demonstrating how computational methods can complement—rather than supplant—critical analysis, and arguing that journalism's democratic function depends not only on the number of outlets, but on transparent, plural, and accountable information flows.

JOS35 Journalistic Content III.

PP 1122 Journalism without history; news without context – A critical political economic analysis of UK media coverage of Israel's ban of 37 INGOs from Gaza

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Journalism, according to the former publisher of the *Washington Post*, Phil Graham, is 'the first rough draft of history'. This paper starts from a different place: the assertion that history is often evacuated from journalism and that, as a result, news is impoverished, and audiences are under-served. This is partly to do with profit-driven journalism privileging breaking-news reporting over the expensive business of articulating context and memory. It is also, however, to do with journalism's commodity status under capitalism, in that it is not simply an economic commodity but also a *reified* area of human activity in which public affairs are transformed into private transactions. Throughout this paper we highlight the spectral qualities of journalism: its flattening of history, its preoccupation with 'miscellaneity' as described by Raymond Williams, and its subsequent mystification of the social world. We illustrate these processes through an analysis of mainstream reporting of Israel's ban of over three dozen humanitarian aid groups from entering Gaza in early 2026, highlighting journalism's systemic historical gaps via studying the framing of events surrounding Israel's illegal occupation in Palestine.

In 2025 Israel introduced a new mandatory registration system for international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) providing humanitarian operations in Gaza, which included new requirements that organizations share detailed information about their staff, funding and operations- a process that has been described as "vague, politicised and impossible to meet without breaching humanitarian principles" (United Nations, 2025). In January 2026, Israel banned 37 aid groups from entering Gaza due to "fail(ing) to meet security and transparency requirements" (Siddiqui, 2025), including Doctors without Borders. One senior UN official warned that such a ban would "cripple" relief operations and cause a "catastrophic collapse of humanitarian services" (Burke, 2026). Throughout this paper we critically examine how top legacy news organizations in the UK have contextualized and historicized this aggressive Israeli escalation, specifically by considering both the absences – the lack of references to imperial manoeuvering in the creation of Israel and the marginalization of issues of occupation and violence – as well as the patterns of meaning when this history is (occasionally) acknowledged.

Throughout our political economic analysis, we turn to the work of Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukács who argues that the functionality of journalism under fetishized capitalist logics reproduces only a fragmented and partial view of the world, while hiding the more systemic connections of capitalist life. Lukács explained that journalism, under said conditions, is thus unable to portray a true picture of the dynamics of capitalist society (even if it wanted to do so), let alone to sustain its preferred narrative of heroic reporters holding power to account. Journalists, like other 'bureaucratic' professionals, are therefore deeply compromised by reified social relations. We conclude that a range of structural factors- including patterns of corporate ownership, a prevailing consensus on foreign policy objectives and a deep-rooted connection between journalistic and political elites- are rooted in contemporary geographies of power that have contributed to this de-historicization of the world represented by legacy news.

JOS35 Journalistic Content III.

PP 1123 Pictogramisation of news photography

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Over the past two decades, media outlets have increasingly been resorting to the use of highly generic and even non-journalistic images, such as stock photographs, in their news coverage. Moreover, we have seen an increased willingness to use photojournalistic images as if they are ahistorical, interchangeable visualizations. Although photography's "special connection" to "the real" has never been as unproblematic as normative presuppositions of mainstream journalism or the theoretical notion of indexicality implied, the growing use of such photographs greatly contributed to the erosion of visual evidentiality as news routinely became accompanied by, or narrated with, photographs with no direct connection to reported events. The severing of the connection to "the real" and generic depictions of content transformed such images from specific visual accounts of events into a general visual shorthand akin of pictograms.

The critique of the pictogramisation of news photography is grounded in (my) typology of functions of photographs in the process of narrating news. There are three basic functions (and by extension epistemic positions) which news photographs can perform in narration of news: informational, illustrative or decorative. Pictogramisation of news photography can occur via three practices: 1) routinized use of stock photographs to cover certain topics, news segments of or even breaking news, 2) use of journalistic images as if they would be stock photograph, and 3) recurring use of photographs with similar generic motives and results in increased share of decorative images. The presentation will highlight the epistemic consequences of the pictogramisation of news photography as such images move from the confinement of soft news, such as curiosities or crime into the domain of spot news coverage and war photography. It is structured around case studies from online editions of Slovene (RTVSLO), British (The Guardian) and US (New York Times) mainstream media.

In the presentation, I will argue that the move from news photographs to "photojournalistic pictograms" implies not only the renouncement of the potential of photography to act as a bearer of certifiable information but that it also fundamentally changes the nature of audience/citizen witnessing via news, which becomes increasingly reliant on invisibility rather than visibility, on trust and opinion rather than on proof or verifiable facts. With this, it unwittingly contributes to the post-truth zeitgeist and thus undermines the status of journalism as a privileged, if imperfect, epistemic actor in democratic societies.

JOS36 Audiences and Journalism III.

PP 1124 From avoidance to agency: Re-designing news recommender systems to re-engage news avoiders

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In today's high-choice media environment (Van Aelst et al., 2017), news organizations face pressures to adapt to technological change and shifting audience expectations. Digital platforms, widely used for news (Newman et al., 2025), rely on algorithmic recommender systems which, optimized for commercial objectives, prioritize entertainment-oriented content (Hagar & Diakopoulos, 2025; Wirz & Zai, 2025). This can foster unintentional news avoidance, frequently obscured by the "news finds me" belief (Gil de Zúñiga & Cheng, 2021). While news organizations increasingly adopt such systems (Blassnig et al., 2024; Bodó, 2019), their role in shaping news avoidance remains poorly understood. This is particularly concerning given the rise of intentional news avoidance, driven by news overload, repetitive coverage, and well-being harms, among others (Newman et al., 2025; Gorski, 2023). Importantly, these motivations result not only from the nature of the journalistic content itself, but also from how recommender systems select and distribute it, often overwhelming users or failing to provide meaningful choices, potentially undermining individuals' agency to stay informed, contributing to a broader "epistemic crisis" (Dahlgren, 2018).

Drawing on the epistemic welfare framework (Authors, 2025), this study investigates how news recommender system design may mitigate news avoidance by empowering citizens to exercise epistemic agency. It addresses two key gaps in journalism research: limited attention to how algorithmic systems influence news avoidance, despite emerging work on the topic (Mattis et al., 2024), and insufficient examination of news users' evaluations and design-related preferences, which have been addressed only selectively (e.g., Mitova et al., 2023; Strikovic et al., 2024). To address these gaps, a cross-national online survey in Belgium and Switzerland (N = 3,076) was conducted to assess intentional and unintentional news avoiders' behavioral motivations, system evaluations, and recommender design preferences related to epistemic agency. Preferences were examined across media systems and types of media organizations.

Findings indicate that news avoiders are less likely to endorse recommender systems. Particularly trust-driven avoiders express privacy concerns and, along with unintentional avoiders, lower agreement with topic discovery benefits. They most strongly are associated to a desire for user agency, particularly modifying settings and deactivating recommendations. Avoidance related to overload and topic salience show similar but weaker associations. Preferences for following

specific topics are markedly linked to well-being and powerlessness motivations, suggesting topical control as an emotional coping strategy. Repetitiveness-driven avoidance is linked to preferences for identifying, understanding, and disabling recommendations, indicating a tendency to disengage from perceived deficient algorithms. Among unintentional avoiders, only topic selection preferences showed a meaningful effect, suggesting a potential pathway for re-engagement. Across contexts, accuracy and trustworthiness ranks first as design criterion for news recommender systems; relevance, often tied to personalization, ranks lower than accessibility and broad reach of news, and immediacy ranks lowest.

These insights offer practical guidance for news organizations and respond to calls to extend journalistic responsibility to algorithmic news distribution (Bastian et al., 2021). They indicate that recommender systems prioritizing user agency and information accuracy can help address structural drivers of news avoidance, thereby strengthening journalism and empowering citizens in their informational choices.

JOS36 Audiences and Journalism III.

PP 1125 Attention control in the contemporary media environment: A mixed-methods approach to understanding content abundance and news experience

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Digital media environments are characterized by content abundance, algorithmic delivery, and constant updates that compete for users' attention (Boczkowski, 2021). News is increasingly encountered alongside entertainment and social content (Disseldorp & Bouko, 2025) in feeds designed to reward speed, frequency, and low-effort engagement (Lindström et al, 2021). While these structural conditions shape the information environment for everyone, individuals differ in their ability to maintain attention, exercise control, and engage intentionally with news (Cole et al., 2025). This study examines how content abundance in digital media environments interacts with individual attention control, shaping how news is encountered, processed, and valued.

We adopt a mixed-methods approach combining a three-wave panel survey with simultaneous online tracking conducted in Brazil (n = 1,998) and the United Kingdom (n = 1,248) and in-depth interviews with 72 survey respondents. The quantitative analysis examines whether self-reported attention challenges are associated with patterns of news use, current affairs knowledge, and misinformation beliefs. The qualitative interviews explore how individuals experience content abundance in everyday news encounters, focusing on perceived distraction, overload, coping strategies, and the subjective sense of control.

Quantitative results show that respondents who report more challenges with attention spans spend similar amounts of time with news sources than those who report fewer. However, perception of attention challenges is consistently associated with lower news self-efficacy and a stronger perception that news is not made for people like themselves. Concerning news use outcomes, attention problems are correlated with lower knowledge scores and with greater belief in misinformation, highlighting the possible negative effects of a lack of attention control. Finally, attention moderates the relationship between news use and knowledge, widening knowledge gaps between attention control groups, and it moderates the relationship between feeling alienated from news and belief in misinformation, suggesting an accessibility disconnect for people with attention deficits.

Qualitative findings illuminate how these patterns are experienced. Participants describe digital news environments as fragmented and distracting, with short-form content, algorithmic interruptions, and constant notifications undermining sustained attention. News is frequently skimmed rather than read in depth, with headlines, summaries, and ambient exposure substituting for sustained engagement. Many respondents report psychological overload, desensitization, and avoidance in response to repetitive and negative coverage, alongside concerns about trust and information quality. At the same time, individuals describe strategic adaptations, including selective attention, deliberate limitation, platform-specific curation, and reliance on incidental awareness to remain informed without becoming overwhelmed.

Together, the findings suggest that content abundance shapes the informational experience of exposure in uneven ways. For individuals with weaker attention control, abundant and algorithmically structured news environments are associated with lower self-efficacy, reduced knowledge gains, and greater susceptibility to misinformation, even when exposure levels remain high. These results highlight how attention-related inequalities intersect with contemporary news environments, producing differences not only in whether people encounter news, but in how effectively that exposure translates into understanding and democratic competence.

JOS36 Audiences and Journalism III.

PP 1126 Experiencing News Marginalization: How low-literate adults navigate and understand news and journalism

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This study examines how low-literate Dutch citizens understand and experience news in relation to the linguistic barriers and socio-digital inequalities they face in their everyday lives. The value of news as a shared frame of reference for connecting to the public realm is not evenly distributed in society. For many low-literate adults, news does not function as a public resource but presents a cognitively demanding, emotionally taxing, and socially distant information environment. This not only shapes low-literate adults' access to news, but also their perceptions of journalism's relevance, experiences of recognition by newsrooms, and the inherent value of news in their everyday lives.

Building on observations and interviews with Dutch low-literate adults (N = 32), we show that news inequalities and inequities not only emerge around accessibility but, foremost, in relation to recognition and representation. Participants' accounts reveal that traditional news practices, for example, on television and radio, are often experienced as irrelevant, overwhelming, or "not for people like me," reflecting a lack of linguistic accessibility, relatable representation, and recognition, as well as institutional acknowledgment. Additionally, participants point to an experiential misalignment: topics such as politics and the economy are framed in ways that do not align with their lived experiences. This risks eroding relevance and trust, which may result in limited informed citizenship and a sense of disbelonging.

Our findings challenge skills-based news literacy frameworks by demonstrating that news engagement or alienation is not solely dependent on access, skills and (digital) literacy, but also on whether disadvantaged publics are addressed and recognized as legitimate news audiences. Drawing from this understanding, we introduce the concept of news marginalization, defined as the patterned exclusion of disadvantaged publics from news as a meaningful civic resource through routine journalistic norms of language, framing, and audience address. Rather than framing disadvantaged citizens as deficient news users, we show how established journalistic practices and current news literacy frameworks fall short in accounting for low-literates' recognition, representation, and lived experience, hindering the democratic function of journalism. Consequently, we argue for a socially situated understanding of news inequities is required in order to be able to produce news that is equitable, inclusive, and socially meaningful to all publics.

JOS36 Audiences and Journalism III.

PP 1127 Making sense of news interest and disinterest: A scoping review

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Journalism plays a crucial role in democratic societies. News informs audiences about current affairs (Nielsen, 2017), raises awareness of societal issues (King et al., 2017), and contributes to shared understanding and social cohesion (Du, 2023). However, journalism can only fulfil these democratic functions if audiences are willing to engage with news. Over recent decades, this essential condition has come under pressure. International research shows a persistent decline in audiences' interest in news, with particularly low levels among young people and women (Newman et al., 2024). This trend raises pressing concerns about journalism's relevance, its capacity to connect with audiences, (Swart et al., 2022), and increasing inequalities in news use (Tabor et al., 2025). Scholars such as Nelson (2025) observe how audiences increasingly "do not care" about news, which is troubling given that news interest strongly predicts diverse and robust news repertoires (Peeters et al., 2025).

Despite the importance of this development, and the fact that news interest has been studied for decades (e.g., Jeffres & Atkin, 1996; Hargrove & Stempel, 2002; Drok et al., 2018), an exploration of existing literature reveals a striking conceptual gap. Unlike related constructs such as news avoidance or trust in the news, which benefit from thorough theoretical development (e.g., Andersen et al., 2024; Strömback et al., 2020), there is no comprehensive framework for understanding news interest and disinterest. It remains rather unclear how these concepts are experienced, whether audiences interpret them in comparable ways, whether different forms can be identified, and how they relate to neighboring constructs.

To address this gap and initiate theoretical consolidation, we conducted a scoping review. To our knowledge, this is the first systematic synthesis of how news interest and disinterest have been defined, conceptualized, and operationalized in research. Following the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2024) and PRISMA guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018), we employed a layered search strategy across Web of Science, Scopus, and Communication Source. A rigorous title–abstract and full-text screening resulted in approximately 200 eligible peer-reviewed English-language journal articles in which news (dis)interest constitutes a central research focus (the final screening phase is still ongoing).

Preliminary findings indicate conceptual fragmentation. Although news interest appears frequently in research, it is rarely explicitly defined. Many studies treat "news" and "interest" as common-sense terms, assuming they are commonly understood (Røsok-Dahl & Ihlebæk, 2024). Yet, operationalizations vary widely, ranging from attention to news (Mesch et al., 2013), to cognitive engagement (Masullo Chen et al., 2020), behavioral patterns (Yuan, 2011), or self-reported interest (Trew et al.,2009). On the other hand, news disinterest is often theoretically neglected or treated merely as the inverse of interest (e.g., Schäfer et al., 2024), rather than being examined in its own right.

Taken together, the findings reveal substantial conceptual ambiguity regarding the concepts of news interest and disinterest. Clarifying how these concepts are experienced, particularly news disinterest, is crucial for a better understanding of audience-news relationships. This review provides a nuanced theoretical foundation for future empirical research into both concepts.

JOS37 Journalistic Practices

PP 1138 Mapping journalistic OSINT networks and practices across layers of supply, interpretation and popularisation

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Over the past decade, data journalism investigations have adopted open-source intelligence (OSINT) techniques and practices (Dodds et al. 2025; Karan 2024; Kotisova & van der Velden 2023; Zamith 2023; Reese & Chen 2022). These operational tools and methodologies include the use of geospatial data, crowd-sourcing data collection, and multi-dimensional event reconstruction. Their growing presence within data journalism practice has enhanced collaborative and cross-national approaches for larger investigations, including underlying business models and funding schemes (de-Lima-Santos 2023). The term 'open-source investigations' (OSINV) is now increasingly used to distinguish journalistic uses of such methods from their origins in state surveillance and criminological research (van der Woude et al. 2024). OSINT/V practitioner communities are becoming part of a "trust-building infrastructure" (Zamith 2023) that journalists access to embed transparency into their data-based storytelling.

Charlton et al. (2024) have analysed such collaborations in relation to fact verification, mapping the dynamics of collaboration and developing an initial theoretical framework that distinguishes between the input, throughput and output stages of OSINT/V in news practice. Based on this framework, this research paper analyzes how OSINT/V practices are transferred into newsroom products across networks of practitioners affiliated to three layers: 1) a supply layer of activist civil society organizations raising issues or providing data; 2) an interpretation layer of dedicated research teams acting as investigative specialists; and 3) a popularisation layer of global news brands adopting and innovating OSINT/V approaches to create visibility and credibility for their practices. The research contributes to the development of a broader framework for 'mainstreaming niche innovations' in journalism studies (Geels 2004; Authors 2023) to underline the networked transfer of skills, practices and tools between different actors in journalistic investigative networks.

Empirically, the study is based on mapping actor relations between participants of Europe's largest data journalism conference, Data Harvest in Mechelen, Belgium, from 2016–2026. Using the conference's online directory of all speakers for link retrieval, the main method consists of a social network analysis (SNA) of ties between actors (Nooraie et al. 2020), calculating the top 10% of central actors in each layer based on frequency of attendance and collaborations in projects. The study then analyses in which functions these actors have contributed to prominent data journalism projects presented at Data Harvest, and how these collaborations have contributed to mainstreaming OSINT/V techniques and practices in newsrooms. Centrality measures from the network analysis allow the creation of a shortlist of central authorities in each layer, who will be interviewed during the 2026 conference to add a qualitative understanding of practice development in the field. The research links OSINT/V practices, their development and popularisation across news production layers with a grounded understanding of the networked nature of project-based, international investigative collaborations. As a timely contribution to a field of growing research and practical relevance in digital journalism, it explores how the incorporation of trust-building methodologies from alternative fields can help restore journalism's "epistemic authority" in society (Carlson 2020).

JOS37 Journalistic Practices

PP 1139 Do we need to ask about field access systematically? Challenges (and solutions) for recruiting journalists as research participants

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In this presentation, we problematize the increasing challenge in empirical journalism research to gain access to (representative) samples and want to prompt a discussion in the research community of how to address this threat to scientific validity. While it is important that scholars access journalists' perspectives to understand how journalistic culture, practice

and the field are changing, researchers repeatedly find that potential participants either do not respond to interview and survey invitations or actively decline to participate (Blanchett et al., 2023). Although declining participation is legitimate, response rates, challenges in sampling, or the implications of self-selection often remain methodological footnotes. With this presentation, we strive to contribute to a more reflective and transparent handling of this issue in journalism research.

Based on four world café discussions with (journalism) researchers and journalists, we identified several *threats to research validity and approaches to mitigate them as well as reasons for non-participation and solutions to address them*. The world café discussions with about 40 participants were held in September 2025 at a national journalism research conference in Germany and moderated by us. Results were documented and systematically analyzed by the submitting authors.

With regard to **research validity**, discussants mentioned uncertainty about the general population of their studies since many journalists are atypically employed and thus not listed as newsroom staff. Discussants also highlighted the implications of self-selection biases, either due to journalists' personal interests and priorities or because employers encourage participation in research to different extents. Such experiences and concerns potentially affect researchers' selection of research topics shifting to questions that can be addressed without accessing journalists. The discussants suggested **strategies to address these challenges**, one of them being a call to increasing transparency in the methods and limitations sections of research articles, referring to obstacles in the recruitment process. Furthermore, participants suggested triangulating non-responses through other data points. Documenting, archiving and describing data more clearly to make it available for further use were also mentioned as well as meta-studies identifying potential patterns of non-responses. Lastly, participants discussed to what extent soft responses like written cancellations could be used as data sources, touching on ethical issues.

With regard to the **reasons why journalists do not participate** in research, discussants mentioned oversaturation from too many requests by researchers and students, to journalists' feeling of lacking time and competence, to research's limited value for practice, to journalists' insufficient access to data afterwards, and to a potential divulgement of trade secrets. In order to **build lasting trust in journalism research**, discussants advocated for closer cooperation with editorial offices, for example through newsroom visits. Here, personal contacts could sharpen mutual trust and build bridges. Further, they emphasized the importance of accessibility and practice-orientation when presenting the projects' goals and approaches to potential participants.

The discussion indicates that scholars share an awareness and a wish to systematically address these issues. Hence, this contribution aims at stimulating further conversation with an international research community at the ECREA conference.

JOS37 Journalistic Practices

PP 1140 How nature connectedness shapes journalists' values and professional practices

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To what extent does a connection to nature impact the roles and practices of journalists? In recent years, there has been a growing academic interest in fostering Connection to Nature (CTN). Although no single definition of CTN prevails in the literature (Tam, 2013; Tiscareno-Osorno et al., 2023), the concept is generally understood as the extent to which individuals feel, think, and experience themselves as part of the natural world (Nisbet & Zelenski, 2013). Prior research shows that CTN is linked to environmental concern, goals, and sustainable practices (Richardson et al., 2020; Stenfors et al., 2025; Whitburn et al., 2019), as well as more ecologically conscious attitudes and behaviors (Hatty et al., 2020; Lengieza & Swim, 2021). In communication research, CTN has mostly been examined as a dependent variable, for instance in experiments testing whether mediated nature experiences increase connectedness (Arendt & Matthes, 2014; Janpol & Dilts, 2016). However, little attention has been given to CTN as an independent variable that might shape journalists' values, role conceptions, and professional practices. This study integrates theoretical perspectives on CTN (Gosling et al., 2010; Lengieza & Swim, 2021) with research on journalistic roles and professional values (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2017; Mellado, 2019) to examine how journalists' perceived CTN relates to their role orientations and reporting practices. To this end, we invited more than 30 German journalists- who have been awarded for their contributions to environmental reporting- to participate in in-depth interviews. Our sample currently includes eight journalists with experience in both publicly funded and commercial media, and additional interviews are forthcoming. Participants reported broad professional backgrounds but showed a shared focus on investigative and data-driven methods. Their mean age was 44; 83% identified as male and 17% as female. Our interview guide included questions about participants' motivations for covering environmental issues, their perceived connectedness to nature, their journalistic role conceptions, and their professional practices. Preliminary findings show that participants identified with multiple journalistic roles, but two stood out: the democratic watchdog and the agent of social change. CTN emerged as a central factor shaping these practices. Most participants regarded fostering CTN among audiences as an explicit goal of their work, and many described CTN as influencing how they frame environmental stories. Different dimensions of CTN were associated with different reporting approaches, suggesting that journalists' own relationship with nature meaningfully informs their professional decisions. This study opens a new line of inquiry by positioning CTN as a psychological factor relevant to journalists' role conceptions and practices. Limitations include the focus on journalists already engaged in environmental reporting and the exclusive reliance on interviews. Future work could combine validated scales of CTN with measures of journalistic role orientations to explore these associations more

systematically. Despite these limitations, this study contributes to both environmental communication and journalism studies. For journalism research, we identify an additional factor shaping journalists' role conceptions and professional practices. For environmental communication, we show that the perceived degree of CTN influences communicators and the messages they produce.

JOS37 Journalistic Practices

PP 1141 'A sense of shared reality': Community, place, and practice at mill media

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This paper will present initial findings from a week of qualitative fieldwork undertaken in July 2025 at the headquarters of Mill Media, the Manchester based start-up credited with 'reinventing community journalism' (Cooke, 2024). As Usher (2021) argues, 'Journalists are communicators of culture and traditionally have been empowered as cultural authorities to communicate place' (p. 7). With its emphasis on long-form narrative journalism and city-regional cultures, Mill Media offers a fruitful site for discovering how such traditions of place-based journalistic authority can be revived and recombined with contemporary digital journalism practices. This paper will draw on fieldnotes and eight interviews with Mill Media journalists, with particular attentiveness to the production of the *Manchester Mill;* the company's inaugural title launched in 2020 and now part of a stable of city-based news brands.

In the context of convergent global media culture, a return to journalistic practice centred on place has a particular significance in the UK due to over a century of press centralisation in London squeezing local titles in favour of readerships based around class (Curran and Seaton, 2019, p. 45). Furthermore, while significant studies in the U.S have considered challenges to place-based journalism through newsroom ethnographies at metropolitan dailies (Ryfe, 2012; Anderson, 2013; Usher 2014) this approach has not been followed to the same extent in the UK, despite a venerable tradition of enquiry into the practices and routines of specialist and 'beat' journalisms (Tunstall, 1971).

As the first scholarly inquiry concerned with journalistic practices at Mill Media, this paper will outline the routines, cultures, and the nature of efforts to 'typify' news events at the start up (Tuchman, 1978, pp 211–12) . In doing so, the following questions will be considered:

To what extent does the underlying model of a community and subscriber driven online publications shape journalistic practices at Mill Media?

How does the emergence of Mill Media map on to wider social and cultural trends in the UK: such as the gentrification of post-industrial urban spaces, the re-emergence of civic and regional polities, and the mobility of immaterial labour?

Does the re-valorisation of place within journalistic practice, alongside the renewal of long-form and narrative journalism (cf. Braghieri, 2021) represent a response to the wider epistemological crisis of mediated actors and institutions? (Davies 2018).

Schlesinger's (1987) landmark *Putting 'Reality' Together: BBC News*, notes that a 'stop watch' culture (p.84) of rapid deadlines within ubiquitous news organisations was often a key element shaping journalistic practice. In contrast, the 'shared reality' that Mill Media journalists refer to relies on a slower news cycle, higher audience engagement and the leveraging of particular place-based loyalties. This paper will sketch a new conceptual outline of this potential co-created reality, as part of a necessary project to restate journalism's role in the creation of publications of record, a concept that has itself always been bound to notions of community and place (Cotter, 2010, p.253).

JOS37 Journalistic Practices

PP 1142 Adapting the news: A study of the selection and editing practices for social media news, and the impact on journalistic authority

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Most newsrooms have become increasingly dependent on spreading their content through social media platforms. Existing research has explored the vulnerabilities and counterstrategies of journalistic platform dependency, but the actual content production processes, and the rationales behind them, are often overlooked. This paper addresses this gap by examining 15 Norwegian newsrooms' daily news production for Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and TikTok.

Theoretically, the study leans on the concept of journalistic authority, defined as a contingent relationship in which certain actors come to possess a right to create legitimate discursive knowledge about events in the world for others. Journalistic authority is, in other words, based upon the relations that make authority possible, and is never automatically granted. Instead, it is dependent upon actual work results and the narratives journalists construct about the value of their work. New practices for selecting and presenting news stories on social media, and the narratives constructed around these stories, therefore can have great impact on journalistic authority. From this, we ask two research questions: 1) What practices do

Norwegian newsrooms apply to select and edit news for different social media platforms? 2) How can these selection and editing practices help build or weaken journalistic authority?

The empirical material of the study consists of observations and interviews with social media journalists and editors from 15 Norwegian newsrooms, where the newsrooms were strategically selected to secure diversity in size, ownership model, and geographic location. To gain further insight into routines and practices, one week of observation was conducted at one national and one regional newsroom. Known for professionalism and relatively stable financial conditions, the Norwegian news industry makes a good case for examining the development of new practices under favorable structural conditions.

Preliminary findings reveal that platform characteristics significantly affect selection and editing. Both Facebook and Snapchat are considered "traffic machines", but where most existing stories are reposted on Facebook with minimal changes, stories for Snapchat are fewer, heavily adapted, and highly commercial. In contrast, TikTok and Instagram are deemed important for branding and reach, making journalistic selection criteria more central. On all platforms, editing practices are tailored to platform algorithms and user demographics, often simplifying stories and avoiding certain images or words (like sex and Hezbollah) to bypass algorithmic moderation. Of stories produced solely for social media, most can be categorized as "explainer stories". In these stories, journalists and editors either explain ongoing news or the work practices and role of journalism to a younger audience.

Particularly the use of explainer stories and the strategic avoidance of certain words and images are telling examples of how newly developed practices have the potential to build or weaken long-term accumulated authority. While avoiding words and images may cede authority to algorithms, the explainer stories can potentially strengthen journalistic authority through demystifying journalistic practices and building a relationship with younger audiences.

MCS01 The Datafied City

PP 0670 Data practices as place narratives: Sense-making, accountability, and cultural organisations as media

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This paper builds on the intersection of three contemporary dynamics: first, datafication, as a process that permeates everyday life with data (Hepp et al, 2018; Kitchin, 2014). Second, the shaping of culture by a complex tension between institutionalised culture (cultural organisations) and cultural dynamics that increasingly unfold across multiple platforms (Burgess et al, 2022), and third, the complexities and tensions in the datafication of institutional cultural activity, between culture as a space for support, investment, and accountability, and culture as a space for artistic expression and creativity (Belfiore, 2022; Durrer et al, 2019).

Cultural organisations must navigate these tensions in a context of increasing expectations of data-driven decision making (Tamm et al, 2022), awareness of the fallibilities of data (Kitchin, 2025), inconsistencies in reporting mechanisms of cultural value (Walmsley et al, 2022), and the challenges in balancing local and national accountability. This paper explores how cultural organisations 'sense-make' (Weick, 1995) through their data policies and practices. Drawing on an organisational ethnography of a performing arts organisation, it uses thematic, content, and discourse analysis to identify: 1) how cultural organisations define and activate data, from inception through processing; 2) how this shapes organisational self-knowledge, and 3) how this frames the accountability relationships with multiple audiences and stakeholders.

The case study is based in a location that balances a mosaic of identities including recent city status, a rich industrial heritage, and some of the most marginalised communities in England (UK Gov, 2025). The paper foregrounds how cultural organisations function as mediatized institutions and sites of connection in complex times, mediating accountability to self, place, and government, through data. Data practices do not just represent organisational activity, but actively produce spatial narratives on value, belonging, and impact within the city. In this sense, cultural data practices emerge as part of the shifting grounds through which urban futures, forms of inclusion, and modes of cultural value are negotiated, and data-driven decision making becomes a key interface through which cultural organisations negotiate their role within governance and local ecosystems. In doing so, the paper exemplifies the wider implications of data-driven accountability and sense-making in a datafied society and, innovatively, strategically defines culture in the media context, emphasising its role as a space of connection and communication.

MCS01 The Datafied City

PP 0671 Addresses, addressing, and addressability, and the data-fied state

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In "The City is a Medium," media theorist Friedrich Kittler wrote, "ADDRESSES are data which allow other data to appear" (1996, p. 724). Addresses facilitate relationships between media—in all its varied forms, content, and effects—and space. This paper considers the role of addresses, addressing, and addressability, within the contemporary data-fied state. Addresses provide a kind of substrate out of which relationships between governments and their constituent locations, individuals, and communities are composed. Existing literature tends to approach addressing in terms of globalized—or geodesic—approaches. By engaging with localized and emergent addressing systems, this research considers how addressing is embroiled with specific projects of governance. Focusing on the example of the UK, addressing is considered from three perspectives:

Historic

The development of the full national British postcode in the 1960s which coincided with the development of fully mechanized mail sorting as well as the development of computer systems to automate many other functions of government.

Contemporary

Recent developments to the UK's National Address Gazetteer, now a co-managed database which services a range of contemporary and emerging government and industrial functions. The National Address Gazetteer is indexed to the postcode but also designed as a more technically robust replacement with the potential to extend the reach, capabilities and purposes of government.

Future

The changing and increasing stakes of addressing in the context of the embedding of addressing operations more deeply within British government systems including synthetic intelligences. As addressing becomes more thoroughly operationalized as an aspect of governance, questions arise regarding its role in future subjectivities such as who and what does and doesn't get addressed, how, and why.

This paper draws from long-term work in progress on a monograph—*Postcode: addressing humans and machines*(under contract with UCL Press)—which take a historical and cultural approach to the history of addressing in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. At *The Synthetic city* conference in 2023 (Dublin), in response to the call, I proposed the idea of addressing as the coordination of relationships between synthetic and "usual" realities using a series of fragments drawn from the wider book. At ECREA 2026, as I am completing the manuscript, I propose to present from a specific more recently developed chapter which elaborates on my discussion of coordination by considering the role of addressing in consolidating contemporary state power.

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MCS01 The Datafied City

PP 0672 Localizing platform governance: Learning from place-named Facebook group moderators in Greater London

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In early 2025, Facebook's global content moderation policies were subjected to sweeping changes that reignited public and scholarly debate about the platform's power, responsibility, and governance. While these shifts were visible and troubling, there has been comparatively little discussion of how such global policy changes intersect with how Facebook often operates as a localised communication infrastructure. This paper argues that understanding this disjuncture requires approaching social media governance less as a centralised, rule-based system, but as a set of **locally situated and orientational practices** through which platform governance is enacted in everyday, place-based and socio-technical contexts.

Empirically, the paper draws on in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in 2021 with administrators and moderators of twelve place-named Facebook groups across Greater London. These groups, organised around neighbourhoods, suburbs, and other locally meaningful spatial referents, occupy an important but under-examined position within Facebook's governance ecology. While formally subordinate to Facebook's global community standards and enforcement systems, they are governed in practice through the situated judgments, labour, and risk management undertaken by volunteer moderators who are themselves embedded in the localities their groups reference.

The analysis develops four themes. First, moderators' practices are shaped by their varied orientations to the *local situation*, in which online moderation is entangled with offline routines, reputations, and risks of place-based harm. Second, moderators actively make *representative claims to the local,* particularly around who and what the group stands for, while managing tensions between demographic representativeness, affective authenticity, and their group's relationship with formal political institutions. Third, moderators engage in *curating the local* by balancing the group's role as a noticeboard, a space of care, and a site of conflict, particularly around crime, commerce, and political issues. Fourth, moderators continually *negotiate the platform* itself, developing practical, often partial understandings of Facebook as an algorithmic, corporate, and mutable infrastructure that both enables and constrains local governance.

Conceptually, the paper situates these findings within debates that characterise Facebook as a state-like or quasi-sovereign actor. Such perspectives point to the unique power of translocal platforms like Facebook, yet risk overlooking how governance is localised through intermediary actors. We suggest engaging with the political concepts of subsidiarity and localism, to develop an alternative way of thinking about platform governance both empirically and normatively: one that recognizes moderation as a form of localised governing labour, while highlighting the limits of purely centralised or global regulatory solutions. In doing so, the paper contributes to scholarship on platform governance by emphasising a spatial analysis, demonstrating how global platforms are continuously re-made through situated practices of local moderation.

MCS01 The Datafied City

PP 0673 Doing public sphere in Rural East Germany – Local communication within and beyond journalistic structures

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East Germany and the former GDR as a social space has been widely discussed in literary, media, political, and academic discourses for years. However, "the East" is often treated as subordinate rather than a true participant. The study to be presented is built on two key assumptions: Firstly, the takeover of the East German press by West German publishers at reunification, which led to ongoing media concentration in East Germany (Tröger, 2024). Secondly, these economic factors have shaped institutional and discursive dynamics in current discussions about East Germany. This is why East German citizens often encounter barriers to full participation in national discourse, leaving their perspectives underrepresented

(Mau, 2024). In contrast, local public spheres tend to be more accessible, allowing greater citizen involvement with lower barriers. Simultaneously, the decline of professional local journalism worldwide raises concerns for democracy. Therefore, examining changes in local public spheres amid media consolidation is relevant beyond isolated cases.

Considering these factors, an interdisciplinary case study was conducted in a village with 1500 inhabitants in the north of the eastern German state of Saxony. It examines how local public spheres in East Germany are formed and how they are influenced by the decrease of journalistic structures, societal context, history, and discourse. The study is built on a theoretical framework combining public sphere theory, discourse theory, and field-informed approaches from ethnology and sociology. A multi-method-design was used to meet the complex requirements of the research subject. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with village residents and chairpersons of local associations. In addition, participant observation was carried out in the village, and the results were supplemented by a document analysis of various place-related sources and a content analysis of local news coverage.

First results of the case study can be summarised as follows: In infrastructurally well-positioned municipalities in East Germany, residents are dealing with the decline of local journalism creatively. For example, the local administration shares information about events via the WhatsApp status function instead of advertising in local newspapers. Furthermore, the findings show that inhabitants are generally satisfied with life in their village, largely due to its vibrant local association culture. Nevertheless, residents often feel constrained in their ability to participate in broader societal discourses, which is also a problem of press centralisation. On the one hand this confirms the democratic relevance of local public spheres. A well-developed local public sphere can, after all, satisfy certain needs that are normally directed towards a broader public sphere. On the other hand, the study also corroborates the well-researched inequality in discourse with and about East Germany. Regional disparities and the accompanying discursive imbalances can be observed on a global scale. The study therefore reflects two democracy-theoretical considerations central to current social science research.

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MCS01 The Datafied City

PP 0674 Situating local journalism: Proximity between places and roles in news-production process

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Capturing local journalism presents several challenges due to its inherently fluid and context-dependent nature. However, its inherent proximity and its marginal position within the broader journalistic field could offer a crucial lens through which to investigate processes of social and cultural change, which also affect the perception and experience of place.

Recognising local journalism's role as a powerful agent of socialisation and its unique proximity to the communities it serves, this study has investigated the role of local journalism towards their communities, considering digital and hybridised context. Journalism is thus understood from an institutionalist perspective, as it is shaped by routinised practices, explicit and implicit rules and beliefs that influence journalistic work. Institutionalist theory is valuable not only for analysing journalistic practices and dynamics, but also for understanding their adaptability in the context of digitalisation.

This study thus proposes the framework of "situating local journalism". This framework has been designed to acknowledge the intersecting relationships between: (1) the geographic places in which local newspress are rooted; (2) the digital environments where news circulates; and (3) the places of news production, whether physical and virtual. Local journalism is thus understood not merely as a professional activity that reports on a given territory, but as a social institution that actively co-constructs places through its routines, narratives and relationships. Proximity is here conceptualised in a two-fold way. On the one hand, it is intended as spatial proximity grounded in territories, everyday co-presence and dense relational networks. On the other, it is positional proximity, drawing on Haraway's reflections on situated knowledges: journalists' embeddedness shape their epistemic stance and forms of authority. Situating local journalism in this sense allows us to move beyond abstract, placeless notions and to theorise journalism as an institution whose legitimacy and futures are negotiated within concrete configurations of place, infrastructure and power. Elaborated from ethnographic observations of local newsrooms in North-western Italy between 2023 and 2024, this framework offers a theoretically grounded lens to understand how local media maintain social relevance and foster belonging in an increasingly unstable media world.

MCS02 Sustainability and Community-building

PP 0769 Co-creative communication and resistance in liminal contexts: vulnerability, participation, and solidarity purchasing groups in marginalised Italian communities

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Our presentation is based on research into the emergence of participatory practices in marginalised and liminal urban contexts in Italy. It focuses on the complex relationship between vulnerability, communicative ecosystems, and processes of community formation. We analyse two distinct yet interconnected phenomena: marginalised communities in the peripheries of southern Italy, and solidarity purchasing groups (GAS). We interpret these GAS as a form of resistance to neoliberal logics, through innovative communicative and organisational practices.

Our theoretical framework integrates an analysis of universal vulnerability with processes of deep mediatisation that transform localities into translocal assemblages, in which face-to-face interactions coexist with digital networks. Rather than designating 'vulnerable populations', vulnerability constitutes a permanent structural condition that is distributed in profoundly unequal ways. In the liminal contexts studied, this condition is exacerbated by socio-spatial segregation, institutional fragility, and persistent digital divides.

Communication plays a pivotal role as a transformative practice and instrument of resistance. A co-creative approach involving sharing problem definition, collectively designing interventions and distributing epistemic authority redistributes narrative power. This enables communities to autonomously construct meanings, practices and solutions. In the case of GAS, visual communication and collective identity, as expressed through websites, social media profiles and networks of hyperlinks, constitute fundamental infrastructures for building shared identities and organisational networks. This balances the need for simple narratives of community experiences with the complexity of storytelling, which can sustain contemporary, networked activism.

Digital media occupy an ambivalent position: on the one hand, they reproduce structural inequalities through the extractive logics of commercial platforms; on the other hand, when reappropriated strategically through co-creative processes, they facilitate novel forms of visibility, autonomous narrative production and hybrid participation. This research, based on a mixed-methods approach combined with creative methods, demonstrates how communities and GAS can constitute themselves as producers rather than consumers of content, discourse, and collective action. This enables them to develop everyday forms of resistance (and/or social direct action) against marginalisation, exclusion, and neoliberal individualism.

The theoretical integration of universal vulnerability, liminality and co-creative communication provides a robust framework through which to understand the emergence of agency, power and transformation in mediated contexts. Hybrid participation, mediated forms of relationality, and the communicative co-construction of narratives and collective actions can promote substantive resistance to neoliberal governmentality, social atomisation, and institutional fragmentation. From this perspective, co-created communication is a political practice that can broaden collective ambitions, empower shared action, and encourage forms of everyday resistance in cities and liminal/transitional spaces. It works towards fairer and more democratic social structures.

MCS02 Sustainability and Community-building

PP 0770 Remote working together in urban coworking spaces

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Digital technologies have untethered work from traditional workplaces, a development which was further accelerated by the global COVID pandemic (2020–2022). This development has led to increased spatial flexibility for knowledge workers whose 'laptop work' enable them to work from almost anywhere. Yet, the flexibility comes at a cost: despite the digital affordances of mediated co-presence, experiences of social isolation are common among remote workers. Furthermore, working from anywhere means never being fully freed from work; it is always present. This phenomenon is particularly salient when remote work is conducted from home, the primary sphere of private life. Many remote workers have therefore sought alternative environments that offer social as well as digital infrastructure, such as coworking spaces, coffee shops and other public milieus. As Polson (2026) argues, the growth of such establishments is reshaping many city centres in the Western world, where work and leisure are integrated in new ways. This paper asks: what does it mean to work in such "third places" beyond home and workplace (Oldenburg 1999), and what kinds of urban sociality does it give rise to?

As part of a larger ethnographic project on coworking spaces (CWS) in Scandinavia (*Hot desks in cool places: Coworking spaces as post-digital industry and movement)*, this paper focuses on the experiences of remote workers who, for various reasons, have stopped working from home and instead begun working in a local CWS. The CWS in question, located in central Malmö (Sweden), markets itself as a "homely coworking space" offering an informal atmosphere constituted by,

among other things, second-hand furniture, a large collective kitchen – and a ban on wearing shoes indoors. This relaxed, "non-corporate", atmosphere was highlighted by many participants as a reason for choosing this particular CWS.

Reflecting on this move, i.e. going to work beyond the home, the remote working participants emphasized the sociality with other coworking/ remote working tenants. In resonance with Oldenburg's concept of the third place, these others were considered neither colleagues nor friends, but something in-between. They worked side by side yet often knew more about one another's private lives than each other's work. Moreover, leaving the home and go to a "workplace" also meant that their homes reappeared as a "home" – a place for family life and intimate relations, unsullied by wage work.

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MCS02 Sustainability and Community-building

PP 0771 The city's temporal gears: Negotiating temporalities in urban environmental communication

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At the urban level, institutional communication can play a role in harmonising diverse perceptions of sustainability with the temporalities of the actors (Lammers & Barbour, 2006b; 2011) and of environmental crises. Information is co-constructed between local institutions and citizens through ongoing processes of social negotiation, enabling the articulation of compromise among different representations of sustainability (Moscovici, 1981) and the negotiation of possible futures.

While institutional discourse prioritizes citizen engagement, the ethnographic perspective reveals that communication flows are shaped by conflicting temporalities and heterogeneous paths- political, bureaucratic, media-driven and societal (Lundgren et al., 2015; Jurin, 2010; Howlett, 2020). The literature illustrates that environmental emergencies require rapid responses (Lundgren et al., 2015; Gunderson & Holling, 2002), yet institutional timelines often lag behind the urgency of ecological degradation (Jurin, 2010). As a result, environmental issues unfold on timescales that clash with both institutional reactivity and consensus-seeking processes (Howlett, 2020), generating structural frictions that undermine communication effectiveness.

My research investigates the factors interacting with these temporalities, impacting the effectiveness of local institutional environmental communication. Drawing on the case of the remediation of the Caffaro National Interest Site in Brescia- a long-standing highly controversial brownfield remediation project- the study specifically examines the dynamics through which the Caffaro Observatory, a participatory forum established in 2021, has established and pursued its communication protocol. The analysis focuses on stakeholder involvement (Dryzek, 2005; Putnam, 2000), the use of digital media (Bartoletti et al., 2016), institutional transparency (Istrate, 2022), and consensus-building (Turnhout et al., 2010).

Adopting a diachronic, multi-level methodology- based on participant observation, analysis of communication artifacts (bulletins, reports, guidelines), and interviews with key actors (policymakers, officials, community representatives)- the study highlights how communication effectiveness is shaped by the friction between heterogeneous temporalities, which can be conceptualized as a system of interlocking temporal gears. Each gear- representing political cycles, bureaucratic caution, media immediacy and civic expectations- rotates at a different speed and rhythm, often producing friction, misalignment or even blockages in the communication process. The resulting communication objects operate as "temporal boundary objects" (Yakura, 2002), serving as negotiated artifacts that mediate between these different temporal rhythms and stakeholder perspectives. These objects are both technical outputs and products of compromise, negotiation and structural attrition, reflecting the "shifting grounds" of social negotiation.

The results show how the asynchrony among diverse temporalities shapes the configuration of communication objects as a negotiated compromise. The communication protocol developed for the Caffaro remediation exemplifies an attempt to manage this asynchrony by setting up a path that, despite persistent frictions, keeps communication intelligible and acceptable to citizens. In this perspective, the very content and structure of communication emerge from clashes among heterogeneous temporalities and from the need to find workable compromises between incompatible rhythms while opening new pathways for negotiating possible futures.

MCS02 Sustainability and Community-building

PP 0772 Reclaiming participation through vulnerability and co-creation in mediatised liminal urban spaces

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Urban peripheries increasingly reflect the "shifting grounds" produced by socio-spatial fragmentation, deep mediatization and structural inequalities. These contexts operate as liminal environments where everyday life unfolds across unstable

material and communicative infrastructures. Building on empirical research in Southern Italy and on theoretical contributions from deep mediatization (Couldry & Hepp, 2017), social figurations (Elias, 1978), and spatial singularisation (Reckwitz 2020), this paper proposes a reframing of participation grounded in universal vulnerability and co-creation.

Vulnerability—expanded here following Fineman's notion—offers a lens to interpret how individuals and communities navigate unstable socio-spatial contexts. Rather than identifying a category of "fragile groups," vulnerability exposes the structural interdependence shaping individual trajectories and neighbourhood life. In marginalised urban areas characterised by overlapping social figurations, fragmented expectations and competing symbolic regimes, neoliberal imaginaries continue to permeate participatory rhetoric, reinforcing managerial forms of governance that depoliticise public engagement.

Deep mediatization amplifies these dynamics by reconnecting local spaces to translocal flows of information, visibility and norms. This creates hybrid environments in which digital and face-to-face practices co-constitute identities, forms of public familiarity and everyday negotiations of space. As highlighted in previous studies on mediatised communities (Volterrani 2025), media infrastructures do not merely support communication but reorganise the terms of participation and agency.

Against this backdrop, the paper introduces co-creation as a transversal methodological logic capable of redistributing epistemic authority and enabling communities to articulate situated knowledges. Rooted in collaborative problem definition and shared authorship, co-creation extends the legacy of critical pedagogy and edu-communication traditions, supporting transitions from spectatorship to usage and, ultimately, to protagonism. In liminal contexts where social capital is often privatised or segregated, co-creation provides opportunities to transform relational density into collective capacity for action.

Empirical evidence from Southern Italy shows that co-creative infrastructures allow residents to challenge dominant narratives, reconfigure spatial imaginaries and produce alternative accounts of everyday life. This dynamic aligns with contemporary research on counter-narratives, participatory storytelling and community-based media practices. Rather than reinforcing resilience as a return to equilibrium, these processes cultivate resistance, understood as the capacity to confront structural inequalities, reclaim visibility and shape alternative urban futures.

Digital media play a dual role: while commercial platforms reproduce extractive logics, they can also be reappropriated through co-creative processes that enable community-driven visibility and hybrid participation. These practices suggest that liminal urban spaces can become laboratories for democratic experimentation, where shifting grounds evolve into grounds for encounter, inclusion and social transformation.

Integrating universal vulnerability, liminality and co-creation provides a framework for understanding how agency emerges within mediatised but structurally unequal urban environments. The paper concludes by emphasising the need for institutional models that sustain relational, material and communicative infrastructures capable of enabling co-produced participation and everyday resistance.

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MCS03 Urban Infrastructure, Representation and Media

PP 0879 A touch of magical realism in architectural renderings. The role of visualisations in crafting urban futures

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Digital visualisations of urban development and architecture, commonly referred to as renderings, are increasingly influential in crafting urban futures (Smitheram et al., 2018; Degen et al. 2022; Mélix & Christmann, 2022). Related research about these renderings has mainly concentrated on their manipulative effects and dangers of creating disinformation, or of them providing empty promises (e.g. Groulx & Lewis 2017; Kayalar & Uluğ, 2024; Sheppard, 2001). A specific criticism in related work is that a photorealistic style of presentation would create an illusion of an actually existing urban environment in the future, seducing and persuading viewers to interpret the plans in a favourable manner (Lee & Pae 2017; Degen et al., 2022). The critique hitherto provided relies on a specific visual style (photorealism) and its suggested effects on an actual (future) reality. The premise behind the critique is that the visual style (photorealism) would be interpreted in the light of a specific technology (photography) and its claims on an indexical relation to a depicted reality, hence leading to misinterpretations by experts and lay audiences alike.

Based on long-term field work in the development of Turku Science Park, including participant observation, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, and assessment of planning documents, we enter into dialogue with related work in the area that focuses on actual urban planning practices within which these images are embedded (see Degen & Rose, 2022; Degen et al., 2022; Mélix & Christmann, 2022; Smitheram et al., 2018). We suggest that architectural renderings are created for situational purposes and might never be intended to make claims of a one-to-one model of a future development,

as tends to be discussed in some of the related work. Also, when conducting a closer visual analysis of current renderings used in urban planning, we find that the visualisations include dimensions that break with assumptions of photorealism. In our case studies, most of the renderings analyzed are not very convincing as *photorealistic* renderings. Instead of emulating a pure photorealism, they play with a touch of *magical realism* (cf. Faris 2004), specifically displaying a future that may never be. Magical realism "combines the realistic and the fantastic so that the marvelous seems to grow organically within the ordinary, blurring the distinction between them" (Faris 2004, 1). This combination of realistic and magical elements provides an unsettling feeling of contradictory elements including a vagueness of depicted time and space (cf. ibid.). With the help of this magical realism, visual experts, urban planners and architects may discuss several, and at times conflicting potential futures, which they know might never get realized as initially suggested.

Using this framework, we aim to enhance the understanding of renderings as performative tools in urban planning and development, where aesthetics and presentation techniques extend beyond the goals of photorealistic, one-to-one models of future developments. This analysis allows for a more sustained discussion of the visual means of imagining livable futures.

MCS03 Urban Infrastructure, Representation and Media

PP 0880 At the crossing: Infrastructural power in everyday urban mobility

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Smart pedestrian crossings are increasingly deployed in Estonia as part of smart city initiatives, promising improved pedestrian safety, real-time responsiveness, and more efficient traffic management through sensor-based and data-driven technologies. As long as crossings function as expected, their operation remains largely invisible and fades into the background of urban life. It is only in moments of breakdown, such as when sensors fail to detect pedestrians, signal timings appear inconsistent, or movement is disrupted, that smart crossings become noticeable and contested.

The deployment of smart pedestrian crossings in Estonia has been shaped by longstanding public debates on traffic safety and surveillance. Their introduction, alongside other data-driven and surveillance technologies, has been motivated by concerns over road safety and efforts to reduce pedestrian accidents and fatalities. Traffic remains one context in which surveillance and predictive tools are often viewed favourably, despite broader public unease about datafication.

Drawing on a case study, this paper examines how infrastructural power is enacted through the operation, breakdown, and maintenance of data-driven pedestrian infrastructure. Within this context, smart crossings are framed as infrastructures of care that promise safety and responsiveness while embedding sensing, data extraction, and automated decision-making into everyday mobility. Based on interviews with municipality representatives who had implemented smart pedestrian crossings (n = 6), system developers (n = 3), and accessibility specialists (n = 2), the study reveals that the reliability of smart pedestrian crossings depends on routine maintenance and repair work, highlighting their ongoing vulnerability. At the same time, governance arrangements concentrate infrastructural power by tying municipalities to vendors who control software, data, and system upkeep, shaping how these systems regulate urban mobility and redistribute responsibility, authority, and trust in the smart city. Taken together, these findings suggest that smart pedestrian crossings operate less as seamless infrastructures of safety and efficiency and more as contested sites where access, responsibility, and ownership are continually negotiated.

MCS03 Urban Infrastructure, Representation and Media

PP 0881 Analysing the current and future urban impact of drone delivery services in Ireland and communication strategies from stakeholders

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In 2020, Irish Broadcaster RTÉ published a video report on Manna, a new drone delivery service, as they delivered two cappuccinos to a private house in Oranmore, a small town of 5,000 inhabitants in the West of Ireland. Since then, Manna has expanded its business to other urban areas in Ireland, targeting several suburbs of Dublin and has secured 30 million dollars in a recent funding round. However, Manna has faced significant backlash from residents across Dublin concerned with noise, privacy and safety issues and the lack of specific drone delivery regulations. Residents have resorted to different communication strategies to express their objection to these services. Some local community organisations such as GADRA (Griffith Avenue & District Residents Association) in Dublin's Drumcondra suburb have liaised directly with Manna, while other communities have mobilised politicians and local residents through townhall meetings and online platforms to protest against drone delivery services, such as the Drone Action D15 campaign in the Dublin 15 postal district, which includes Manna's main delivery hub in the Blanchardstown area.

The use of drones is regulated by the Irish Aviation Authority (IAA), but there are no current regulations that address the rights of local residents or delivery drone's environmental impact, as they fly over or near houses and green urban areas. In Dublin City Council's *Drone and Urban Air Mobility Strategy for Dublin City Council 2024 – 2029*, Manna and drone deliveries are briefly mentioned, along with the argument that for drone services to expand, "public trust and buy-in

will be the key" (Dublin City Council, 2024: 6). Other companies such as Wing, a business belonging to Google's parent holding company Alphabet, have also conducted drone delivery trials in Ireland. However, Manna remains the leading drone delivery company, and they have run their own communication strategies to support their business, including the commissioning of a noise report (Kennedy, 2025) from Trinity College Dublin and a letter of support signed by residents that they presented to Dublin City councillors.

This paper critically analyses the multiple factors involved in the current and future scaling up of drone delivery operation in Dublin, including regulations, resident concerns, feasibility, environmental impact and business models. It also analyses the communication strategies from both Manna and residents to defend or reject the implementation of drone delivery services in Ireland, and how local authorities are addressing the lack of regulation. It argues that the operation of drone delivery services in urban areas in Ireland as a disruptive technology and its future expansion must be sustainable from a social, environmental and business perspective, and that citizens' concerns must inform this process.

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MCS03 Urban Infrastructure, Representation and Media

PP 0882 Operationalising Mediatopos for spatial analysis. Places of journalism in Former Yugoslavia

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Studying journalism as a spatial practice raises a crucial question: how can we study built space without relating it solely to architecture, its institutional settings, or user experience?

Empirical analysis of journalism´s spatiality remains limited, especially in non-Western and post-socialist contexts, shaped by former federal states. Media systems here developed within shifting political circumstances and strongly planned urban landscapes. Furthermore, existing studies mostly focus on normative-institutional analysis and newsroom culture, while analysis of material and territorial infrastructures of journalism is fragmented.

This paper addresses this question and shortcomings by introducing the conceptual framework of *Mediatopos*. This study's interdisciplinary research design encompasses news production as both a material and relational place, characterised by three interconnected dimensions:

1. media regulatory scripts
2. news production sites
3. spatialised journalistic practices

Applied to the case of Yugoslavia, a former socialist federal republic with a characteristic non-aligned position between the Western and Eastern blocs, the *mediatopos* shows how these three dimensions created a unique media system. Yugoslavia´s media system was decentralised and organised across multiple republics that were interconnected through shared broadcast, production, and distribution infrastructures. This relationship resulted in a dense network of newspapers, television, radio stations, and transmission towers that worked both at the republican and federal levels.

This form of spatially distributed media organisation provides a clear case for applying the three-part *mediatopos* framework, which is operationalised through a combination of qualitative methods. Media regulatory scripts are examined through archival analysis of media laws and policy documents. News production sites are analysed through architectural drawings, planning documentation, site visits, and spatial analysis of media buildings. Spatialised journalistic practices are explored through oral-history interviews with journalists and architects, focusing on how spatial layouts and temporal routines shaped professional work.

Taken together, the selected methods support multi-scalar empirical research. At the federal scale, the paper presents an initial spatial mapping of Yugoslav media infrastructures, visualising the distribution of media centres and hierarchies of news circulation. It then moves to selected exemplary sites, including a newspaper building, a television complex, and a broadcast tower, to demonstrate how architectural design and urban positioning shaped the journalistic system and everyday working practices within them. This scale-shifting strategy is supported analytically by visual tools, such as mapped research routes and spatial inventories of media sites, to guide the transition from federative patterns to site-specific readings.

Although developed through the Yugoslav case, this approach is not exclusive to it. This paper presents an interdisciplinary conceptual framework and methodological tool-set at the intersection of journalism studies and architectural research that contributes to ongoing discussions on space, journalistic practice, and power relations.

MCS04 Aesthetics, Play and Mediated Urban Space

PP 0984 The collaborative and hybrid outdoor: A mixed-method study of a large-scale Norwegian outdoor recreation project Stolpejakten

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In recent years, outdoor activities are increasingly mobilised to address societal challenges regarding public health, urban development, tourism and sustainable leisure, often through public-private partnerships. At the same time, outdoor space is mediatised and gamified through apps, platforms, and social media, blending analogue and digital experiences and reshaping how movement, play, and place are organised and experienced. These developments reconfigure outdoor environments as hybrid media infrastructures, facilitating holistic experiences beyond traditional outdoor recreation.

This article examines *Stolpejakten* [The Pole Hunt], a large-scale Norwegian initiative epitomising these shifts. Participants use apps and websites to locate "poles" in urban and rural spaces, collecting points and badges. Since 2013, *Stolpejakten* has expanded to 250 of Norway's 357 municipalities and attracted more than 200,000 participants, registering over 2.6 million poles (2025). The activity is free, as the infrastructure is maintained by volunteers and supported by the state, municipalities, businesses, and sport and tourism bodies. *Stolpejakten* aims to include all: "to facilitate the activation of both young and old; inactive people, schoolchildren, cyclists, disabled people and wheelchair users – or those who simply want to get to know the city and district better" (website).

Theoretically, the paper addresses *Stolpejakten* as a holistic experience, blending digital and physical, societal and personal, competitive and community elements. The paper draws on interdisciplinary perspectives from three research fields: Outdoor studies shed light on the turn towards "micro-adventure" and "nærfriluftsliv" [Norwegian term for nearby outdoor recreation], while sociology offers perspectives on public-private collaboration, self-optimisation, and community-building, and communication studies provide perspectives on gamification, locative games, and digital nudging.

Empirically, this article combines document analysis of media and websites, app walkthroughs of *Stolpejakten*, observations of physical sites across urban and rural locations, and participant narratives drawn from media interviews and social media. The paper explores 1) how *Stolpejakten* is organised as a collaborative effort between different stakeholders, 2) how *Stolpejakten* is designed as a hybrid experience between the physical and digital, and 3) participants' experiences.

The paper contributes in three ways. First, there is little interdisciplinary research on large-scale platformised projects such as *Stolpejakten* and comparable initiatives. Second, the analysis is situated in highly digitalised Scandinavian welfare-states, with public–private collaboration and policy-driven commitments to public health and outdoor accessibility. Third, the paper goes beyond single-method approach and use multiple sources to highlight collaborative, hybrid, and holistic dimensions. The paper also offers practical implications by highlighting design elements and cross-sector partnerships as essential, while also illuminating tensions.

A main finding is that *Stolpejakten* is not experienced merely as an app or a physical activity, but as a collaborative and hybrid spatial arrangement involving multiple stakeholders and integrating diverse meanings. Participants navigate through overlapping logics of connection, competition, and consumption, pursuing exercise, exploration, and education, while municipalities, volunteers, and private sponsors negotiate infrastructural, civic, and commercial dimensions. Rather than being driven by a single dominant motive, *Stolpejakten's* appeal lies in its capacity to hold together competing rationales (e.g., health promotion, community-building, gamified participation, local tourism), within a mediatised outdoor environment.

MCS04 Aesthetics, Play and Mediated Urban Space

PP 0985 Going back to the streets in the (post-)digital city: Why visual-material research matters

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Over the past decade, the role of digital technologies in shaping cities has become prominent in urban research. Big data, social media platforms, and algorithmic logics are now all central to how urban space is both represented and materialized. Meanwhile, the 'smart city' has taken center stage in both public and academic debates on urban planning. More recently, geographers and urban studies scholars have begun to focus on the aesthetic dimensions of cities' digital infrastructures. Some of this work has engaged with the visual-material approach I developed in the 2010s to conceptualize the urban built environment as a medium of communication in its own right.

However, in digital urban research, aesthetics is still too often treated as an outcome rather than as an active force in processes of spatial transformation and inequality. I argue instead that visual-material research is increasingly indispensable for understanding (post-)digital cities; aesthetic considerations routinely drive, rather than simply reflect, political and economic choices that result in urban injustice. As I show, an 'aesthetic trope' frequently underpins debates and decisions regarding urban redevelopment, functioning as a mode of governance that frames visual disorder as a social problem and

thereby legitimates capital-driven transformation. At the same time, digitally and visually mediated imaginaries consolidate aesthetic power by narrowing urban sensibilities around photogenic vistas and marketable lifestyles.

To move beyond platform-centric understandings of digitally mediated spatial production, I advocate methodological approaches that foreground sensory, embodied, and experiential engagements with urban environments. I outline the method of *being through there*, which brings scholars' embodied presence and movement into analytical focus, attuning research to the textures, materials, and encounters through which urban mediation unfolds. By "getting off Instagram" and returning to the streets, we can more fully account for the entanglement of digital infrastructures with the physical and symbolic conditions of urban life.

Ultimately, this paper positions visual-material research as vital to understanding how aesthetics shapes and is mobilized within the uneven spatialities of the post-digital city, thereby expanding the conceptual and methodological horizons of media geography.

MCS04 Aesthetics, Play and Mediated Urban Space

PP 0986 Becoming Wuzhen: Media aesthetics, temporality, spatiality, and the shifting authenticity of place

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Authenticity has long been a central concept in media studies (Dubrofsky 2022; Hill 2005), urban studies (Banks 2023; Zukin 2010), and tourism studies (Rickly 2022; Wang 1999), where it has been theorized as historical truthfulness, social construction, existential experience, or performative effect. As social life and space become increasingly mediatized, integrative approaches to authenticity are needed to bridge these fields and account for the mediated production of place-experience (Mercier and Abidin 2025). Thus, this paper examines how the authenticity of place shifts over time in relation to changing media aesthetics, temporal imaginaries, and mediated spatial organizations. Rather than a fixed attribute of place, this paper argues that authenticity operates as an analytical lens through which the "notion of place" is continually produced, transformed, and reconfigured. Specifically, this paper asks how media culture reshapes what authenticity "looks like" and comes to mean in a tourist destination over time.

The study focuses on Wuzhen, a historic scenic town in Zhejiang, China, as a case study and adopts a visual-material approach to place analysis (Aiello 2021). Wuzhen's affinity with media production makes it a revealing case, as the town has become one of mainland China's most renowned and profitable tourist destinations through its heritage value and successive roles as a television drama set, an international theatre festival venue, and a reality TV environment. The study combines two weeks of on-site ethnographic observation conducted during the Wuzhen Theatre Festival in October 2025 with a visual–textual analysis of selected television dramas, reality TV programs, festival materials, and social media content since the 2000s. Ethnographic fieldnotes document spatial organization, aesthetic design, tourist practices, and everyday interactions, while media analysis attends to formal elements, narrative structure, aesthetic style, and temporal framing. Together, these methods examine how mediated representations and lived spatial practices co-produce place and authenticity over time.

The findings identify three overlapping phases in Wuzhen's mediated transformation. In the early 2000s, a "cinematic past" emerged through the television drama *Sishui Nianhua*, which cast Wuzhen Dongzha (East Zone) as a nostalgic water-town landscape. In the 2010s, a "cosmopolitan future" was articulated through the Wuzhen Theatre Festival and the World Internet Conference in Xizha (West Zone), positioning the town as an outward-looking international cultural hub. Since 2021, a "performative present" has taken shape through reality TV and the circulation of social media content, producing an atemporal, postmodern pastiche that foregrounds lifestyle performance and consumption. These phases do not replace one another linearly but overlap and interact, generating a recursive temporal layering that continually reshapes how Wuzhen is imagined and experienced.

The study contributes to scholarship on media-space relations by demonstrating how authenticity is reconfigured through shifting media practices. Societally, it offers insight into how media production, tourism, urban (re)development, and cultural policy intersect in contemporary China, highlighting the social consequences of aesthetic reinvention for spatial experience. As such, it provides a non-Western perspective on how mediated authenticity shapes urban and tourist spaces under conditions of rapid development and intensified mediatization.

Keywords

Authenticity; media tourism; temporal imagination; mediated place-making; Wuzhen

MCS04 Aesthetics, Play and Mediated Urban Space

PP 0987 Sky media and the vertical city: Spatial paths, infrastructural connections, and urban imaginaries in chongqing's drone light shows

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Drone light shows have rapidly become a prominent feature of global urban nightscapes and cultural governance. While often framed as technological innovation or promotional spectacle, existing research rarely examines drone performances as mediating infrastructures that reorganize urban space, visibility, and governance. At the same time, scholarship on verticality has predominantly focused on military vision and surveillance, whereas emerging Chinese debates on "low-altitude media" and "sky media" have not yet been systematically connected to media infrastructural studies or everyday spatial practices. This theoretical and empirical gap is particularly salient in mountain-based megacities such as Chongqing in Southwest China, where the urban terrain is inherently volumetric.

To address this gap, the study conceptualizes drone formations as a sky medium with mediatic a priori rather than as neutral technical tools. It integrates three theoretical strands: (1) studies of verticality and volumetric urbanism, which illuminate how aerial sensing, vertical gazes, and layered spatial regimes reconfigure what becomes visible and governable; (2) media urbanism and infrastructural studies, treating the urban sky as a programmable communicative layer composed of devices, regulations, and institutional coordination, and bringing this into dialogue with Chinese notions of low-altitude media and urban interface; (3) political aesthetics and affective governance, which understand drone patterns and light scripts as "sky codes" that mobilize emotion, belonging, and future imaginaries. Based on this framework, the study investigates: RQ1 How do drone performances reorganize ground–river–mountain–high-rise–sky relations into a calculable vertical space, reshaping Chongqing's spatial paths and volumetric imaginaries? RQ2 How do government departments, cultural and tourism agencies, technology firms, platforms, and media form an infrastructural network that governs airspace, scripting, and risk regulation? RQ3 How do citizens, tourists, and drone enthusiasts experience, reinterpret, or contest these aerial images through on-site viewing and online practices, and what forms of urban affect and future-oriented imaginaries emerge?

Methodologically, the study adopts a multimodal qualitative design combining visual–spatial, textual–discursive and experiential–affective analysis. The dataset comprises official drone videos and scripts, policy/media documents, and screened Douyin comments (1271 texts and 1502 comments) from June 2023 to November 2025. In the visual–spatial layer, Python (OpenCV) is used to extract key frames; formations are manually annotated relative to riversides, bridges, mountain slopes and high-rise clusters to produce simplified trajectory diagrams showing how Chongqing's terrain is encoded into a low-altitude media corridor. In the textual–discursive layer, Python-based segmentation, frequency, co-occurrence and TF-IDF analyses identify discourse clusters such as "sky media", "low-altitude economy" and "governance model"; critical discourse analysis examines how these narratives translate infrastructural coordination, safety regulation and branding into seemingly neutral progress. In the experiential–affective layer, eight interviews and comments are thematically coded in MAXQDA, while selected viewer videos—focusing on framing and hashtags—situate aerial images within viewing contexts and mobility.

Findings show that pre-scripted heights, paths and patterns privilege riverside skylines and landmark towers while rendering other districts marginal; institutional actors stabilize an innovation-oriented "sky media" governance network; and viewers both embrace "cyber fireworks" branding and voice ambivalence over noise, safety and increasingly dense performance schedules.

MCS04 Aesthetics, Play and Mediated Urban Space

PP 0988 Do Manhole covers dream of media?

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Introduction

The cityscapes featured in the film Blade Runner were inspired by Japanese cities. However, as the saying goes, truth is stranger than fiction. Nowadays, Japanese cities are witnessing the emergence of media that surpasses even the wildest imaginations of science fiction. That medium is the 'manhole cover'.

These covers represent the discovery of a new medium within Japan's urban spaces. Japan has installed manhole covers featuring diverse designs. Depicting anime and manga characters or reflecting local culture, there are over 10,000 variations.

This phenomenon stems from the social issue of ageing sewer infrastructure. To raise public awareness of this issue, governments and local authorities have increased their publicity efforts. Manhole covers have become a symbol of this initiative.

The issuance of trading cards featuring manhole covers began in the 2010s. These cards, issued by local authorities, can only be obtained by visiting the respective city. Their popularity has grown, with the number exceeding 1,200 varieties.

Today, manhole covers feature in TV and newspaper reports, attracting attention on social media. They are also used by companies for advertising purposes.

Research objective

The purpose of this study is to clarify the factors that have deepened the mediatization of manhole covers in Japan.

Manhole covers are a fascinating subject in the context of the city as a medium. They resonate with Kittler's (1996) focus on urban infrastructure. Their heterogeneity also evokes Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia.

However, manhole covers have not attracted the attention of media and communication researchers. I must confess that I paid them no attention whatsoever myself.

It was the university students I was supervising who first sparked my interest in them. Initially, I was sceptical of their ideas. To pursue their interest and answer my own questions, we began our research activities.

Research method

This study adopts Couldry's (2012) perspective, focusing on practices surrounding manhole covers. Furthermore this study does not interpret manhole cover designs as media texts. Such design interpretations hold meaning only for a limited group of dedicated fans.

When focusing on practice, we questioned two stereotypes surrounding manhole covers. One is the "appreciation" of manhole covers, and the other is the act of "collecting" cards. This is because assuming the existence of both reduces manhole covers to the domain of a select group of fans.

From 2021 to 2024, we observed people in public spaces and gathered data through questionnaires, interviews, event participation and interactions. Referencing Soja (1996), we examined these practices from the perspectives of space, the body, and the materiality of media.

Conclusion

We thought that the mediatization of manhole covers intensified through a material turn from cast iron to paper cards. This may have bridged physical and mental spaces, giving rise to a 'Thirdspace' (Soja, 1996).

However, cardification also occurred at dams and parks in Japan. By contrast, manhole covers appear to occupy a space that is highly compatible with the deep mediatization of the city (Hepp, 2017). This space is the 'ground'. This is because the modern flâneur walks with their eyes on the ground, perpetually capturing it with their smartphone cameras.

MCS05 Communities and Contested Space

PP 1085 Navigating youth mobility: Route planning and social media apps in the context of communicative mobility

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For young people, route planning services and apps are central to their everyday mobility and communication. Smartphone technologies are a prerequisite for mastering life in simultaneous and heterogeneous locations and enable young people to communicate in multi local spaces (Tully & Alfaraz 2017). Teenagers stay in contact with friends or family constantly; thus, locative mobility services might be of advantage for very young and vulnerable groups (*insecurity decreasing tools,* Monteiro & Gebo 2024). These might encourage exploration of surroundings and increase feelings of safety, but also open up opportunities for surveillance. Regretably, data and algorithms are under control of only a few global platforms.

The constraints of pre-installed software (Nachtwey & Straab 2020) on Android or Apple devices have a significant influence on communication and mobility practices. This affordance gives rise to "*dark scenarios*" (Meister & Schulz-Schaeffer 2020) of technological dependence, as users rarely develop their own solutions. In particular, the reading of (meta)data, action-prescribing algorithms, protocols, and default settings influence usage (van Dijk 2013). On top of this, technology use is reinforced by peer groups, and the default settings of apps are usually accepted without questioning functions and data processes. Nevertheless, drawbacks of location sharing data in particular has hardly been studied by researchers to date, as young people often use it unthinkingly.

Therefore the funded research project "JuMp! – Youth in (sub)urban mobility processes" is investigating the various media routines and mobility needs of young people (including those from working-class and immigrant backgrounds) between the ages of 15 and 24 in terms of user-friendliness, handling, and tech-design justice (Chook 2020). Following research questions are to be answered:

RQ1: How do geo- and social media systems affect the mobility of young people in Vienna, depending on their digital and media literacy?

RQ2: How mobility justice for young people is ensured in Vienna's public transport system?

As mobility repertoires are influenced by sociodemographic aspects results from 48 flash-interviews show that marginalized teenagers often disadvantaged: they benefit little from geomedia due to limited technical skills, battery management,

usability issues, and routine routes. The potential of communicative mobility (Couldry & Hepp 2023) is therefore not being fully exploited.

A mix of social science methods, including auto-ethnographies, interviews, mobility walks (Kusenbach 2003), and visual documentation, combined with participatory technology design methods, sheds light on these weaknesses and aims to contribute to the transparency and understanding of technology designs and their fairness.

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MCS05 Communities and Contested Space

PP 1086 The city park as a platform for ideology, entertainment, and communication: A case study of Riga

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The study analyzes Riga city parks as communication platforms. The first parks in Riga were established in the 18th century and became popular recreational spaces in the following century. In the 20th century, authorities used parks, through names, monuments, celebrations, and rituals, to convey ideological messages and values. Parks are also an important part of the modern urban environment in Riga. Our research focuses on two parks located on opposite banks of the Daugava River. The first is Vērmanes Garden opened in 1817 and named after Ann Wöhrmann, who financed its construction. The park's infrastructure includes greenery, paths, cafés, an outdoor stage, playgrounds, fountains, sculptures, and monuments. During the Soviet period, the park was renamed after Sergei Kirov and a monument to him was erected there. Various events have taken place in Vērmanes Garden, including the first car exhibition, campaigns dedicated to the fight against tuberculosis, a mourning rally dedicated to Stalin's funeral, and beer festivals. Today, this park is a popular venue for city celebrations and a marketplace during festivals in Riga.

The second park studied is Victory Park. It was established in the early 20th century and named in honor of the Russian Emperor Peter the Great in 1910. In 1923, it was renamed Victory Park in honor of the victory in the War of Independence, which secured Latvia's sovereignty. During the authoritarian regime, it was transformed into the main venue for political and military celebrations, concerts, and sporting events. During the Soviet period, a 79-meter-high monument commemorating the Soviet victory in WWII was built in the park. This is also where the May 9 celebrations were held after Latvia regained its independence. These celebrations communicated narratives aligned with Russian historical memory and Kremlin policy. The Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine initiated radical changes in Victory Park. The celebration of the Soviet Union's (Russia's) victory in WWII on May 9 was banned, and the monument dedicated to this victory was also dismantled in August 2022. From 2022 to 2026, Victory Park is undergoing renovation, with the aim of transforming the park from a transmitter of Soviet messages into a modern platform for communicating the values of Europe and democratic Latvia.

Our study analyzes transformation processes, changing messages, and the effectiveness of Riga's parks as communication platforms. The study is based on a representative sociological survey of Latvian residents (to be conducted in March 2026) on attitudes toward parks, visual materials (e. g., photographs, postcards, posters and billboards, newsreels, live internet recordings) ethnographic observations, and interviews with park visitors.

The study reveals important aspects of the conference's main themes by analyzing city parks as shifting grounds of communication. It also discusses how geopolitical conflicts affect the urban environment, determining the ethical framework of parks within it and changing their communicative meaning. The study also addresses ambiguous public reactions to changing meanings attributed to parks.

MCS05 Communities and Contested Space

PP 1087 Platform-mediated urban tourism: Digital representations, urban imaginaries and sociocultural change in Rome

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Our research addresses sociocultural transformations related to current forms of new urban tourism (Füller & Michel, 2014) in three Roman districts (Lynch, 1960) namely, San Lorenzo, Esquilino and Pigneto, focusing on the interplay between

online and on-site dynamics. The goal is to look at the influence of the platformisation of the tourism sector in non-central neighbourhoods of the city that are characterized by intangible cultural heritage linked to everyday life; here, "temporary population" (Brollo & Celata 2022) has been increasing, thus intensifying existing phenomena (gentrification, studentification, Smith 2005) and generating new ones (airbnbisation, foodification, Navarro-Jurado et al. 2023).

Studies that have problematised the transformations occurring in these districts (Parisi, 2014; Carbone & Di Sandro, 2019; Meli & Ricotta, 2022) have rarely framed them within a reflection on the interferences of digital platforms. This research aims to fill this gap by collecting the perspectives of activists, cultural associations, shopkeepers, and permanent and temporary residents, in order to identify the attractive and problematic aspects of the three districts and the role of digital platforms in the ongoing transformations.

The sociotechnical dynamics and "vernacular affordances" (Gibbs et al. 2015) of sectoral platforms such as Tripadvisor, AirBnB and Booking change the way of inhabiting urban spaces. By (mis)representing the places, such platforms end up "selling off" cities, neighborhoods, and related local cultures (Stors & Baltes 2018; Romano et al. 2023).

During the first phase of our analysis we looked at Tripadvisor reviews for our chosen districts, trying to understand how they were imagined and represented by platform users. The results of this preliminary phase informed the interviews we carried out during the second phase, as well as a nation-wide survey.

After identifying over 150 potential participants, we carried out 49 in depth interviews (19 for Esquilino, 15 for San Lorenzo and Pigneto), which allowed us to collect data from long term residents, activists, associations, as well as business owners. We thematically analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2012) the interviews, focusing on the key dimensions of the perception of the district by those who actually live it, the perceived transformations within the space, its representations in the media- both social and mainstream -, narratives surrounding the district - online and offline -, the role of sectoral platforms, and the cultural practices of the district.

Although lacking iconic monuments (excluding the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore), these areas are endowed with cultural meanings that cater to a demand for places represented and perceived as more authentic and livelier than Rome's historic center. There is a shared imaginary surrounding these neighbourhoods - specially in the case of San Lorenzo and Pigneto - which combines historical memory, artistic creativity, political progressivism, and the simple pleasures of food and beverage. Our interviewees, however, look at these elements critically, and consider them another way of consuming places: the distinctive elements of their districts are what digital platforms use to attract new consumers - in this case tourists, digital nomads, city users-, making it so that the area's so called *authenticity* becomes its *brand*.

MCS05 Communities and Contested Space

PP 1088 Crossing urban spaces as women: Female subjectivities between gentrification and media narratives in the roman neighbourhood of San Lorenzo

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This project investigates how women negotiate, reinterpret, and reshape the shifting urban landscape of San Lorenzo, a gentrifying Roman neighborhood whose cultural, political, and symbolic identity has long been rooted in working-class history, anti-fascist memory, artistic production, and student life. Drawing on research that conceptualizes urban space and subjectivities as mutually constitutive (Sakizlioglu, 2018; Curran, 2018), the study examines how women who pass through the neighborhood daily grapple with issues of safety, belonging, accessibility, and cultural change.

The project builds on interdisciplinary scholarship linking gender, space, and gentrification (Bondi, 1991) and on work showing how media and communication shape perceptions of urban environments (Brown-Saracino, Rumpf, 2011). Gentrification is understood not only as an economic and spatial process but also as a site where gender identities are produced, contested, and mobilized. This approach rejects additive models that "add women and stir" (Williams, 2003) and instead treats gender as a relational attribute shaped by context.

The research aims to understand how female subjectivities negotiate and reinterpret a neighborhood undergoing cultural and material transformation. Specifically, how do women negotiate gender in everyday life, in a context of gentrification, media narratives, and shifting spatial conditions?

Methodologically, the project adopts a mixed qualitative approach: 30 semi-structured interviews with women who regularly frequent the neighborhood are conducted using snowball sampling to capture diverse subjectivities from an intersectional perspective. The sampling is supported by "go-along" ethnographic work (Kusenbach, 2003), conducted by the researcher, who is a female subject. This allows for the selection of informants, the drawing of territorial maps, including the use of spatial statistical tools, and the keeping of a photographic diary over six months. Environmental perception, spatial practices, social architecture, and social realms are explored from the lens of female subjectivities.

Preliminary findings highlight three thematic levels containing internal polarized dichotomies. The first concerns women's image of San Lorenzo. Most maintain a perception of a "small village," due to clear spatial boundaries and the presence,

albeit increasingly limited, of long-time residents who act as symbolic custodians of memory. At the same time, residents are seen as active participants in market-driven transformations, such as inflated rents or touristification.

Second, the neighborhood is widely perceived as inclusive, with multiple non-institutional, progressive, and left-leaning cultural spaces where women feel welcome and supported. The safety of private and internal spaces contrasts with the perceived lack of protection in liminal external spaces which are experienced as unsafe and inaccessible.

The third level concerns media impact: traditional news outlets portray San Lorenzo primarily through crime, drug use, or the "malamovida," generating a perception of danger among both residents and outsiders. Female subjects are often more sensitive to certain news stories, especially when they concern domestic violence and gender-based homicides.

By foregrounding women's situated perspectives, this paper disrupts the apparent unitariness of "the neighborhood" and challenges flattened, media-driven representations of San Lorenzo as primarily a space of hedonism, and (dangeorus) entertainment, offering instead critical viewpoint that reveals how gender reshapes the lived experience of urban change.

MCS05 Communities and Contested Space

PP 1089 Negotiating potential futures for declining rural towns – visions beyond exclusion and social fragmentation

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How do we envision the future for rural towns in decline? Representations of the future tend to depict an urban (digital) future where spaces beyond the city are merely provide necessities for the urban citizen, but not a liveable place in its own right. However, critical future studies argue that a transition to a more sustainable society requires multiple visions of the future that challenge our traditional ways of thinking (Jakobsone, 2017). Societies need to collectively create visions of multiple futures beyond the single rational (neoliberal) future path (Goode & Godhe, 2018). Swedish rural towns have been in transition for decades, from prosperous industrial communities – often dependent on a few dominant industries - to depopulated peripheral areas where industries have moved out and public institutions withdrawn. Still, despite identifying a negative trend over time, rural towns tended to adopt economic-centred development strategies modelled on the smart digital city, thus failing to create visions that respond to local contexts and needs, and pressing challenges such as social inequality and climate change. In a project initiated by the Swedish municipality of Hagfors, we explored a community-based approach to identifying and illustrating multiple visions of the futures of this mils-town, stretching until 2044. This paper is based on the narratives, images, sculptures and poems of the future formulated by participants in workshops and interviews. The participants were young adults, cultural workers, industrial workers, local entrepreneurs, politicians, pensioners, and commuters.

The future of Hagfors - if the current trend of continues - will be a place of loneliness and despair, with no jobs, an ageing population, limited public services and a lack of social interaction. Key aspects raised were the continuous withdrawal of recourses and the experience of living in a place in decline, as well as how legislation hinders a green transition in rural areas. Alternative futures included local food production, local energy production, physical meeting places across ages, higher education and housing adapted for all ages. Important values that emerged were collaboration, social inclusion and a more climate-neutral way of life. The study also highlighted the citizens of Hagfors' experience of rural towns being peripheral, both in a regional and a national perspective, and how it affects people's self-image (Stenbacka & Heldt Cassel, 2020). The workshops demonstrated a clear desire for change and a high awareness of how small communities are resourceful contributors to climate change and social change. Most prominent trough all visions of the future were the need for physical meeting places that support local engagement, collaboration, creativity and intergenerational interaction, beyond digital forums (Albris et al, 2024). Rural futures do not lie in digital solutions or smart technology, but in human relationships and physical interaction.

MIP01 Gender, Labour and Resistance across Screen and Platform Industries

PP 0103 Sexism in the screen industries: Understanding leadership and hierarchy through sex based discriminatory practices

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Sexism is an umbrella term for many different discriminatory practices based on gender and sex. However, sexism does not occur in a vacuum but is related to deeply entrenched cultural ideas, values, and practices. It occurs both in high profile settings, such as Hollywood, and in locations well outside it (Liinamaa and Rogers 2022), such as the Dutch screen industries. Also, it is hardly ever addressed in research explicitly.

In my paper I will address several forms of sexist practices in the Dutch screen industries, based on several empirical research projects, both qualitative and quantitative, which I conducted in close collaboration with different colleagues and the foundation Vrouwen in Beeld (Women in the Picture). These practices both reproduce and sustain ideas about leadership and the hierarchies that are prevalent in the screen industries and that limit professional opportunities for female (and other non-male) screen professionals.

For instance, our exploratory research into income in the Dutch screen industries suggests a gender pay gap, as significant differences between female and male professionals' renumerations occurred on several independent variables (Sanders and Buijing 2025). Sexist practices are evident when it comes to the value assigned to specific jobs and tasks, and wages, according to Tang et al. (2022). They argue that in the Netherlands, wages are often lower in professions dominated by a female workforce.

Sexist and harassment practices are facilitated by the highly individualized network character of the industry (Hennekam and Bennett 2017). For instance, Hennekam and Bennett (2017) found that sexism is considered part and parcel of the creative industries, according to their respondents, to the extent that sexualized behaviours are not considered harassment. Our research with actresses, who see themselves as being on the lowest step of the hierarchical ladder, and who are confronted with blatant sexist attitudes and behaviours, shows that one strategy adopted was to accept it as part of the job. Actresses need to pick their battles when it comes to sexism (Sanders and Post, 2024).

The extremely intensive filming periods, the long hours and precarity of work, combined with the social economical reality that still addresses mothers as primary cares, considerably disadvantages women, including camera women, who already face sexist practices with respect to obtaining work, specifically as DoPs (Sanders and Van der Holt 2025). Eikhof and Warhurst (2013) argue it is the production model that is at the base of many practices that produce inequalities in the creative industries.

The continuing sexism in the screen industries (Coate et al. 2023) disadvantages women in their careers, much in line with experiences elsewhere (Dooley and Erhart 2023). By discussing the findings of research with different professionals through the lens of sexism, we can better understand how specific kinds of leadership and hierarchies are shaped and sustained by a variety of sexist ideas and practices across the screen industry.

MIP01 Gender, Labour and Resistance across Screen and Platform Industries

PP 0104 Producing gender (in)justice: Intimacy coordination as a labour practice in the film and television industry

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Gender (in)justice can be understood as a discursive arena (Clarke 2005) in which different social fields (Bourdieu 1993) struggle over dominant ideologies, norms, and values. In the film and television industries, these struggles materialize both on-screen—through narrative, aesthetic, and representational choices—and off-screen, within production cultures, labour regimes, organizational structures, and media policies. Gender-unequal and harmful working conditions are closely intertwined with symbolic systems of representation, particularly with regard to sexualized violence, intimacy, and gendered stereotypes. While gender inequality and precarious labour conditions in the German media industries have been widely examined (e.g. Prommer & Loist 2019, 2023; Dadlani et al. 2024), less attention has been paid to how institutionalized practices of dissent emerge within production cultures and how they are negotiated over time.

This paper examines how discursive demands for gender justice are translated into industry-relevant practices that are currently undergoing processes of institutionalization. We focus on the emerging professional fields of Intimacy Coordination (IC) in Germany, conceptualizing them as media industry practices of contradicting that intervene in established production cultures (Thomas et al. 2024; Lünenborg et al. 2025). IC address power asymmetries, consent, and care in on-set labour relations, with implications for how discriminatory narratives and gendered myths are staged audiovisually. Both practices challenge long-standing industrial norms surrounding creative freedom, auteurism, and the normalization of harm in audiovisual production.

Situating our analysis within media industry studies and production culture research, we understand film and television as "media cultures in transition" (Banks 2018), shaped by the co-evolution of economic structures, organizational strategies, and cultural discourses. Methodologically, we combine situational analysis and situational mapping (Clarke 2005) with field- and assemblage-oriented perspectives to map discourses, actors, institutional frameworks, and power relations shaping intimacy coordination as an emerging media profession. The analysis draws on expert interviews with intimacy coordinators working in Germany, complemented by industry-related secondary material. The findings reveal a range of structural and individual resistances, from dismissive gestures and verbal rejection on set to organizational exclusion and silencing effects. While some forms of resistance are experienced as recurring and manageable, others actively obstruct intimacy coordination work. These dynamics are situated within a broader socio-cultural context marked by resurgent misogynistic discourses, producing what has been described as a contemporary "feminist paradox" (Kaiser 2023).

By foregrounding the meso-level of organized production, the paper contributes to critical debates in media industries and cultural production research. It highlights how dissenting labour practices move from marginalized positions toward partial institutionalization while remaining contested, and demonstrates the central role of production cultures, organizational structures, and industry norms in shaping both the possibilities and limits of gender justice in contemporary film and television production.

MIP01 Gender, Labour and Resistance across Screen and Platform Industries

PP 0105 Managing pleasure: How cultural platforms reshape leisure as performance

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This research examines how digital cultural platforms foster a conception of leisure as an object of self-management. More specifically, focusing on the case of literary platforms, we demonstrate how readers who initially signed up on websites to keep track of their readings or discover new books end up setting personal reading goals (such as "read 100 books in a year"), establishing reading schedules, mobilizing managerial vocabulary, referring to other users as "colleagues" and to reading as "work", etc. We argue that it is the interfaces of these platforms—saturated with statistics, performance metrics, completion percentages, and "personal goals"—that encourage users to frame their cultural practices as measurable performances.

To analyze the impact of such platforms on literary practices, we conducted 47 semi-structured interviews of readers, all of whom are active users of one of four book recommendation platforms—Goodreads (the English-speaking leading book recommendation platform), Babelio (which is, with 2 million users, the most popular platform for French-speaking readers), Booknode and Livraddict (two smaller French platforms, supported by long-standing user bases). **34 of the interviewed readers participate in reading challenges, and 27 organize at least one of them.** Presented as mere games, these challenges nonetheless display a managerial dimension: participants must "validate" readings based on one or more constraints, often to earn "points" or reach achievement "levels" or self-imposed personal goals, usually within a limited timeframe, under the scrutiny of other participants, against whom they are sometimes ranked.

Although managerialization of the self has been thoroughly documented, the impact of quantification and performance logics on cultural practices remains strikingly understudied. We however claim that studying the managerialization of literary practices requires to take into account the particular relationship individuals develop with culture—which has not been specifically addressed in studies on datafication. The discourse of our interviewees was thus marked by contradictory injunctions specific to the world of books: on the one hand, a desire to intensify their literary practices—reading being consistently framed as inherently good—, and on the other, a need to constantly reaffirm that "it should remain a pleasure", resisting commercial and productivist logics deemed incompatible with the world of art. Readers wavered between the desire to "challenge themselves" by reading *more* - often adopting a "neoliberal agency" (Gershon, 2011) and thus edging toward a conception of the "self as [an] enterprise" (McNay, 2009)—, while simultaneously criticizing those who read *too much*, accusing them of reading badly and displaying an inappropriate sense of competition.

- Gershon, I. (2011). "Neoliberal Agency". *Current Anthropology*, 52 (4), 537–555.
- McNay, L. (2009). "Self as Enterprise: Dilemmas of Control and Resistance in Foucault's The Birth of Biopolitics". *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26 (6), 55–77.

MIP01 Gender, Labour and Resistance across Screen and Platform Industries

PP 0106 Imaginaries of platform work and (im-)possibilities of creator resistance in Turkish Creator Industry

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As platforms frequently impose changes to enhance profit in the name of "commercial viability," creators are forced to constantly adapt their self-branding and content production strategies (Arriagada & Ibáñez, 2020; Cunningham & Craig, 2019). Recent research demonstrated that against changing platform features and algorithms, creators may try to "game the system" or "play the visibility" game to protect their visibility and engagement with their audience (Cotter, 2019; Petre,

Duffy, & Hund, 2019). These formations present a novel way of forging solidarity and organizing against platforms, such as in the case of "engagement pods," creator groups that were founded as grassroots communities that mutually engage with each other to game the Instagram algorithm (O'Meara, 2019). In some cases, the networks of solidarity built among creators through social media platforms may also lead to more traditional forms of workers' organization, such as the YouTubers' union that was built in Germany (Niebler, 2020). However, it remains understudied how creators' experiences of platform work and the local context contribute to shaping these resistance strategies.

This research investigates the individual and collective modes of resistance adopted by Turkish content creators and how these modes of resistance are tied to their imaginaries of platform work in the local context. According to Van Es and Poell (2020), platform imaginaries are the "ways in which social actors understand and organize their activities in relation to platform algorithms, interfaces, data infrastructures, moderation procedures, business models, user practices, and audiences" (p. 3). Related to this description, the imaginaries of platform work indicate how platform workers, including content creators, perceive and navigate platform work.

This study is focused on Trendyol's affiliate work program, which is established by the country's leading e-commerce platform- Trendyol- and constitutes the largest influencer network in the MENA region with more than 30 thousand creators. By drawing on 17 semi-structured interviews conducted with Turkish influencers and influencer agents between 2022 and 2024, the findings first demonstrate creators' vulnerability to constantly changing monetization rules and platform policies, while highlighting that creators' imaginaries of platform work are crucial not only for shaping how they navigate platform work but also for affecting their willingness to participate in collective action and labor organizing. While Turkish content creators are engaged in individual resistance tactics, and exchange tips and build solidarity with fellow creators in online and offline settings; they are holding back from engaging in more formal collective action both due to their perceived sense of competition and disposability in a large influencer network, and as a result of living in a political climate where freedom of expression and dissident political action is marginalized and silenced. The findings of this research suggest that possibilities of collective action are informed by creators' imaginaries of platform work, as well as local experiences and histories of resistance. As such, this research contributes to multiplying our frames of reference about a simultaneously global and local creator economy by providing situated knowledge about the Turkish creator industry and possibilities of resistance within it.

MIP01 Gender, Labour and Resistance across Screen and Platform Industries

PP 0107 Shifting grounds in cultural and media work: Countering inequality and sexualised violence between #MeToo and resurgent Anti-wokeism

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This paper investigates the persistence of sexualised discrimination and violence in the cultural and media industries, despite the visibility and momentum of the #MeToo movement. To empirically explore this phenomenon, we conducted 58 semi-structured expert interviews between April and October 2024, covering five regulatory levels—cultural and media workers, production companies, funding institutions, professional associations, and political/public administration actors—and two core branches of the cultural and media industries (performing arts and music). Participants were selected to reflect sectoral diversity, organizational and institutional roles, and a range of sociodemographic characteristics. Interviews focused on five research dimensions: perceptions of the problem of sexualized discrimination and violence, responsibilities for its causes and solutions, existing preventive and remedial measures addressing it, assessment and monitoring of these measures, and desired reforms to reduce or prevent sexualized discrimination and violence.

Findings show that while #MeToo has accelerated the development of safeguarding policies, their implementation remains uneven, largely voluntary, and weakly institutionalised. Structural vulnerabilities—precarious project-based employment, informal gatekeeping, and limited access to independent reporting pathways—continue to inhibit accountability, discourage reporting, and expose particularly freelance workers to recurring boundary violations. Legal frameworks, organisational policies, professional associations, and funding-linked instruments exist, but they are often insufficiently coordinated, inadequately enforced, or limited in reach. Interviewees consistently highlighted the need for binding standards, independent complaint mechanisms, anti-retaliation safeguards, mandatory and role-specific training (including professionalisation of safeguarding roles), collective representation, and funding conditionality as essential to meaningful change.

Positioning these empirical findings in a broader societal and political context highlights additional challenges. Across many Western societies, not only in Germany, anti-feminist and anti-"woke" discourses have grown increasingly prominent, framing equality, diversity, and anti-discrimination initiatives as ideological or divisive. While this broader dynamic was not a direct empirical focus, it provides a crucial lens for interpreting the uptake, legitimacy, and durability of safeguarding measures and reform priorities. Progressive movements such as #MeToo, and institutional initiatives to prevent sexualised discrimination, operate in a contested social environment where political and discursive pressures shape the possibilities for institutionalisation and enforcement.

The rise of right-conservative and anti-woke currents challenges the recognition of structural inequalities, the legitimacy of preventive measures, and the willingness of organisations and policymakers to institutionalise change. In this context, safeguarding in cultural labor is not only a technical or organisational task, but also a negotiation over normative authority, democratic governance, and cultural legitimacy. Reform efforts that fail to account for these pressures risk remaining symbolic, fragmented, or marginalised.

By linking empirical insights on sexualised discrimination, preventive practices, and institutional reform to current debates about cultural authority and normative legitimacy, the study speaks directly to the conference theme. It shows how media and cultural institutions in two core branches of the cultural and media industries (performing arts and music) negotiate contested norms, implement inclusive practices, and mediate between organisational, political, and societal pressures, illustrating the contribution of communication and media research to democratic cultural governance.

MIP02 Data, Platforms and Power in European News Media

PP 0207 Anatomy of the Polish Web: A Multi-Layer Analysis of Scripts, Trackers, and Data Infrastructure in the Top 10 News Portals

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Online news portals increasingly operate as complex socio-technical systems in which editorial content represents only one layer of what users encounter. Beneath the visible surface lies an extensive network of JavaScript-based advertising technologies, analytics platforms, content delivery infrastructures, and third-party data flows. Although such systems have been examined globally, the Polish media ecosystem remains underexplored from a technical and infrastructural perspective. This study addresses that gap by conducting an in-depth analysis of the ten most-visited Polish online news portals, focusing on three domains: (1) embedded JavaScript scripts, (2) geographical distribution of third-party resources, and (3) hosting and data-center architectures underpinning the portals themselves. The design of this study was inspired by a talk by Aske Kammer (Roskilde University) at WMEMC 2025. The first component investigates the prevalence, type, and complexity of JavaScript resources loaded during page initialization. Prior research demonstrates that websites often load dozens or hundreds of external scripts many associated with advertising auctions, behavioural tracking, and analytics forming a deeply layered and opaque ecosystem (Englehardt & Narayanan, 2016). Building on these insights, our analysis identifies the number and structure of external scripts across portals, the prominence of major advertising and analytics providers, and the presence of nested script chains that expand the network of potential data recipients. Substantial differences between portals emerge: some load under 40 scripts, while others exceed 150. The study also detects common libraries, A/B-testing frameworks, and outdated components that may introduce supply-chain vulnerabilities, echoing concerns raised in large-scale measurements of outdated JavaScript ecosystems (Schelter & Kunegis, 2016).The second component examines the geographical distribution of third-party servers. Using DNS resolution and IP-to-location services, we map where advertising, analytics, and utility scripts are hosted. A significant proportion of data flows leave the European Union, travelling primarily to the United States and, in some cases, Asia. These patterns raise questions about data governance, cross-border data flows, and the geopolitics of infrastructural dependency issues highlighted in contemporary discussions on digital sovereignty (Musoni et al., 2023).The third component maps the hosting and data-center architectures of the portals themselves. By analysing ASN ownership, CDN routing, and server location, we identify primary hosting providers and the extent to which portals rely on domestic versus global cloud infrastructures. While several maintain core hosting within Poland, many distribute content through international CDN nodes, effectively situating parts of the national information ecosystem outside domestic jurisdiction. Collectively, the findings reveal an ecosystem marked by high variability, extensive reliance on third-party services, and infrastructural centralization beyond Poland and the EU. The opacity of script-based tracking chains and globally distributed hosting architectures underscores challenges for transparency, accountability, and editorial independence in digital media. By mapping these hidden layers, the study contributes a technical perspective to media-studies, platform-governance, and digital-sovereignty debates.

MIP02 Data, Platforms and Power in European News Media

PP 0208 Improvise, Adapt, Overcome: Structural conditions for adaptation in digital-only news media

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This paper explores how structural conditions shape the adaptive capacity of successful digital-only news media. It focuses on two Danish cases (Føljeton and Zetland), both of which have developed from small news startups to sustainable or even profitable news media. While most research on innovation in journalism has focused on individual competencies and organizational practices, this study pursues a structural perspective and inquires which role media-systemic and political characteristics play in enabling continuous adaptation. Drawing upon institutional theory, including the concept of adaptive capacity, the analysis explores how Føljeton and Zetland have responded to (technological, economic, and societal) changes

to their environment through strategic shifts in editorial focus, product development, business models, and combinations of the three.

Empirically, the study conducts document analysis of more than a decade's annual reports and subsidy applications from the two companies under scrutiny. This approach provides insight into how they frame challenges and environmental shifts, and how they plan to meet and adapt to those challenges. Acknowledging how adaptation can be both reactive and proactive, the findings identify key instances of adaptation; that is, moments where the companies do something noteworthy to best suit their (changed) environments. Zetland transformed from a niche publisher of long-form journalism to a daily news outlet with a membership-based business model, and it has later pursued initiative to engage young audiences through personalization as well as audio and video formats. Føljeton has developed from mobile-first news to a newsletter-centric strategy, later wanting to integrate AI tools. These adaptations were consistently supported by the national innovation-subsidy scheme for news media; these subsidies, the paper argues, provided some measure of stability in an otherwise volatile environment.

The analysis demonstrates that adaptation is not merely an organizational characteristic, but, rather, a process conditioned by structural factors. The democratic-corporatist media-systemic model of Denmark as well as the welfare-state ideology and policy create a context that supports innovation and resilience. One central reason, the paper argues, is that the predictable frameworks of public subsidies provide institutional stability that makes long-term strategizing possible for companies that operate in a sector that faces technological disruptions. This way, emphasizing the importance of structural characteristics, the paper contributes to the scholarship on the innovation, sustainability, and adaptation of the news media.

MIP02 Data, Platforms and Power in European News Media

PP 0209 The configuration of journalistic work: Studying news workers as users

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This paper draws on ethnographic observations of Content Management Systems conducted at the Swedish public broadcaster Sveriges Television (SVT) to show how software design shapes digital news work. To conceptualize news workers as users, the paper deploys a material-semiotic perspective (Law, 2008), which draws attention to the relations between users, software, and designers (Woolgar, 1991), and to how technologies, through their composition, are inscribed with "scripts" (Akrich, 1992) that guide—but do not determine—human action and can come to reshape relations between organizational actors.

Data was collected at SVT in 2024 and 2025. Observations followed the work of a team of developers and designers building the company's news CMS, *Astrid*, for a total of six weeks, as well as work in a regional newsroom for one week. Observational data was complemented by 20 semi-structured interviews with 19 managers, developers, designers, and news workers.

The paper shows how software designers act as organizational intermediaries, mediating the ambitions and concerns of different actors in news organizations and attempting to materialize them in design. In performing this work, designers engage in understudied but consequential practices. Design work is characterized by forms of knowledge production, where designers study the labor of news workers and leverage this knowledge to legitimize the reshaping of journalistic conduct—either by enhancing certain features of journalistic work or by attempting to disrupt it and redraw the distribution of responsibilities in newsrooms. For example, the implementation of a co-writing function in the company CMS generated friction over the autonomy of journalists vis-à-vis their editors.

By foregrounding these dynamics, the paper advances research on the importance of new professions in the news industry. Previous research has primarily focused on developers (Deuze, 2004; Napoli, 2014; Möller, 2024). By focusing on designers, the paper highlights an overlooked group of actors who can exert significant influence over news work, as they study, recommend, and materialize particular ways of performing journalism, thereby shaping journalistic practice.

MIP02 Data, Platforms and Power in European News Media

PP 0210 More for less: Labour and process in factual television production

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While a growing body of research investigates media production and the conditions of cultural work, there have been few attempts to apply Labour Process Theory (LPT) and its observations about capitalism and labour to this field (Sonn et al. 2019). In fact, labour process theory has been perceived as too deterministic, neglecting worker subjectivity and agency and, therefore, making it unsuitable for the investigation of cultural labour (Ursell 2000). Nevertheless, continuing efforts to rationalise media production processes raises the question of how such processual change affects media workers.

In this paper, we return to Harry Braverman's (1974) claims about labour under capitalism, which inspired LPT, and examine to what extent his observations apply in a contemporary cultural industries context. In particular, we focus on the production

of unscripted factual television programming in the UK and investigate the consequences of recent reorganization of the production process and its related changes in the division of labour and occupational roles for the experience of work. Our argument is based on semi-structured interviews with practitioners at the beginning and the end of the production process, namely, self-shooting Producer-Directors, who capture raw footage on location, and Edit Producers, who edit the footage into the final program. This approach enabled us to examine the impact of reorganization on different work roles and in different production stages.

Based on our findings, we argue for the persistent validity of Braverman's claims about alienation and exploitation in relation to process albeit with differences in nature and scale. We do not deny the specificity of cultural production as a form of work nor the subjectivity and agency of workers. Rather, drawing on our research in the British television industry, we argue that while the general principles for work under capitalism, as outlined by Braverman, can be observed in cultural production contexts, they materialize in distinct ways. We further argue that this impact is not challenged but heightened by the conditions workers face in the contemporary flexible labour market.

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MIP02 Data, Platforms and Power in European News Media

PP 0211 Hollywood in Italy: Runaway productions, tax credit, and territorial impacts

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Over the past decade, Italian territories have increasingly been selected as locations for international runaway productions. According to reports issued by the "Direzione Generale Cinema e Audiovisivo" — the institutional body of the Italian Ministry of Culture responsible for supporting the national film and audiovisual sector — nearly 400 productions were hosted in Italy between 2016 and 2024, with approximately €2.7 billion spent on Italian executive production services. A decisive factor in this growth has been the introduction of the tax credit for foreign productions.

The phenomenon of runaway production — particularly in relation to Hollywood — has been widely addressed in the literature (Elmer and Gasher 2005; Wasko and Erickson 2008; Steinhart 2019), as have the artistic and economic drivers behind it (Goldsmith and O'Regan 2005; Cucco and Richeri 2013). By contrast, the specific relationship between runaway productions and Italian territories remains largely underexplored (with the notable exception of Cucco and Scaglioni's 2024 study on Bollywood productions in Italy). This paper examines the phenomenon through the interdisciplinary lens of location studies (Hansen and Waade 2017). Specifically, it draws on theoretical frameworks from media industry studies — particularly production studies and the political economy of media — as well as from film-induced tourism research.

The analysis focuses on productions that can be classified as Hollywood (in terms of cast and crew, origin, budget, and production structure) that were filmed in Italy from 2018 onwards and benefited from the national tax credit. Prominent examples include *Fast X*, *The White Lotus*, and *Ripley*. Across these titles, the paper analyses patterns in the use of Italian territories, the tax credits obtained, the investments made in Italy, and the main commercial actors involved.

The paper addresses two research questions: (1) how relevant are Hollywood runaway productions — particularly in terms of executive production companies involved and resource allocation — for the Italian audiovisual industry? and (2) does the attraction of a large number of high-budget productions with wide international circulation contribute to the global promotion of Italian territories? In the aftermath of significant changes to the Italian tax credit system, the paper advances a critical reflectionon the potential of international tax incentives, asking whether they represent an efficient use of public resources and an effective tool for repositioning Italy within the global audiovisual landscape

The study draws on the database of the "Direzione Generale Cinema e Audiovisivo" and on an original dataset developed as part of the author's doctoral research. The personal dataset includes over 50 records (Hollywood productions), reporting production-related, economic, territorial and narrative setting (on-screen location) data. To address the first research question, the analysis compares institutional data with the personal dataset. To address the second research question, all analyses are conducted on the full personal dataset — particularly with regard to territorial and narrative setting variables — and interpreted through film-induced tourism frameworks (Beeton 2016; Champion et al. 2023; Reijnders et al. 2024); specific cases are discussed only as illustrative examples where relevant.

MIP03 Generative AI and the Transformation of Creative Labour

PP 0320 A typology of processes. Distributed agency in audiovisual creative labour

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The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) within the audiovisual industry is shaped by asymmetric relations that affect how creative decisions are made, how work is organised, and how value is allocated. This paper approaches AI adoption from a labour perspective, focusing on how agency is negotiated across creative workers, organisations, and non-human actors.

Most existing academic research on AI in the audiovisual field concentrates either on descriptive accounts of adoption processes, often centred on productivity gains, or on discussions about creativity framed through a dual lens that contrasts technological power with human agency. We claim that there is a lack of a more nuanced and granular vocabulary to better explain how agency is distributed and negotiated between human and non-human actors in creative labour. Drawing on a relational approach to creativity (Celis Bueno et al, 2024), the typology integrates three analytical dimensions. First, typologies of contracts distinguish between formal labour, informal labour, and platform mediated labour (content creators), highlighting how employment arrangements structure decision-making. Second, types of automation differentiate between replacement, humanly-extended automation, augmentation and control, allowing us to examine how different types of automations affect creative labour. Third, types of workflows distinguish between artisanal, industrial, and informational workflows, which is key to understanding how control is exercised along the production chain and how this shapes AI deployment.

To empirically test this framework, we complement this typology with an exploratory qualitative study based on in-depth interviews to producers and employees in television organisations (formal workers), film directors (informal workers) and content creators (platform-mediated workers). In this preliminary phase we present the results of the first six interviews, with an intended sample of fifteen (or until reaching thematic saturation).

Preliminary findings support the usefulness of the typology. First, we identified that contract type shapes AI adoption decisions. In formal contracts, adoption is driven by top down strategies focused on efficiency and productivity, alongside forms of delegated agency linked to dependence on standardised tools developed by large technology providers. In informal and platform mediated contexts, adoption is more case dependent, often guided by experimentation desire and, in some occasions, by ethical or sustainability concerns. Second, perceived regulatory uncertainty and the relationship with clients significantly condition creative decisions, as clients may have specific demands and constraints on each project. Third, AI contributes to a shift toward informational workflows, marked by feedback loops, overlapping of productive phases, increased iterative processes, and greater flexibility, although this shift is less pronounced in large organisations (that are still characterised by an industrial workflow). Finally, AI adoption is associated with reskilling (as new competencies might be required) and deskilling (as technical skills are perceived as less valued, partly due to lower barriers of entry to technology, hence reducing the negotiation capacity of workers).

In conclusion, the preliminary empirical results demonstrate the usefulness of the threefold typology for analysing AI adoption in the audiovisual industry, with specific attention to the asymmetrical distribution of agency, benefits, and risks within creative workers.

MIP03 Generative AI and the Transformation of Creative Labour

PP 0321 Slop shops, ghost artists and author avatars. AI and streaming services

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The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) has completely shifted the discussion around cultural production as Large language models (LLMs) for text and diffusion models for images, music, and video make the manufacturing of human-like creative output a straightforward task. AI-enabled content production at scale has repercussions for streaming as a media distribution model, particularly because it ties in perfectly with the promise of abundance from streaming services. While low-cost and low-effort content production presents a possibility to harness for platforms that require an influx of fresh content in large quantities, there are many challenges. Unbridled AI content production is already starting to challenge the authority and quality of digital platforms, most conspicuously in the form of "AI slop".

This paper provides a case-based discussion of how AI is shaping content production for streaming services and the challenges and policy responses that are starting to appear. It takes its starting point in three cases of AI-assisted content production by and for streaming services. Case 1 is connected to YouTube, where the User Generated Content (UGC) model comes with few restrictions, thus inviting a mass influx of AI generated videos. Some research suggests that more than 20 % of the videos that YouTube's algorithm shows to new users can be characterised as slop, despite Google's attempts to restrict "inauthentic content". Case 2 is related to the music streaming service Spotify. According to reports, Spotify has included thousands of tracks from so-called ghost artists and ghost labels, many of them likely AI generated. These ghost

artists provide royalty-free music, boosting the streamer's catalogue at a low cost. Many tracks are within genres like Lo-Fi and Chill, music to serve as background noise, sometimes termed functional music, or what Spotify itself calls a lean-back experience. Case 3 relates to the audiobook streamer Storytel, who initiated an experiment with AI story creation in 2024, inventing an AI "author" to develop a book using various generative AI models. The resulting anthology, called *New Horizon: Love in an AI World,* is available for streaming in both ebook and audiobook versions on Storytel's platforms.

Together the three cases shed light on AI-generated and AI-assisted content generation from different perspectives, including UGC and as part of streaming platforms' strategic and experimental collaborations with AI creators and tools. The paper will discuss how generative AI and the existence of slop and lean-back music, point to a radical change in the production and consumption of culture and media content. Finally, the paper will adress policy responses and pushback from artists and creators in the face of Gen AI.

MIP03 Generative AI and the Transformation of Creative Labour

PP 0322 Mapping the future media creator: A pilot study on human-AI workflows in audiovisual production

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Generative AI (GenAI) is reshaping creative practices pushing media industries to reconsider the human role while re-imagining collaboration with AI models and the need to preserve the value and authenticity along these processes. Given the challenges this poses for the education of the future media professionals, and especially considering the widespread instrumental approach to AI in education, there is still a lack of understanding regarding how future media professionals perceive, experiment, negotiate and learn in audiovisual creative workflows with Generative AI.

The paper addresses this gap by presenting the results of a six-week pilot study implemented in an undergraduate audiovisual course in which thirty-eight students, twenty-five of whom completed the full protocol (n = 25), produced a narrative short film by combining multiple audiovisual generative AI models while documenting their processes. The course was structured around the basic competence framework for AI Literacy proposed by Ng et al (2021), which distinguishes knowing, understanding, using, evaluating and addressing ethical issues.

Findings emerge from a pre- and post-intervention mixed-methods approach including: (1) a self-reported AI Literacy questionnaire validated by Ng et al. (2024), (2) three open-ended questions regarding creative processes with AI and their own experiences and (3) a novel methodological framework named workflow mapping, where participants visually represent their expected workflow before the intervention and the executed afterwards, promoting metacognition and allowing results to be cross-referenced with the participants' narratives. In the findings, participants describe Human-AI workflows as iterative, bidirectional, negotiated, dialogical and emotionally charged processes where agency is distributed and human roles shift from operation to coordination, supervision and co-direction. Frustration arises when human intent cannot be expressed, but some participants overcome it over time through greater awareness of the underlying workings of the models. This awareness also comes with a more detailed vocabulary to articulate the dilemmas, problems, and opportunities of creating with AI.

This pilot study underscores the suitability of a mixed-methods approach for a meticulous understanding of how Human-AI Workflows are articulated in real scenarios, highlighting workflow mapping as an instrument with the potential to expose evolving mental models and the complex and relational nature of creativity with GenAI. In that sense, the workflow emerges as a critical unit of analysis that can guide a proper comprehension on how GenAI transforms media industries and professional identities. In summary, this paper contributes to the understanding of Human-AI creation by providing a significant case study with early career creators that expose the ways in which GenAI is being adopted, negotiated, contested and applied in audiovisual creation and pointing out to future trends in media industries such as the rise of multifaceted professionals or the increasing importance of soft skills.

MIP03 Generative AI and the Transformation of Creative Labour

PP 0323 Reconfiguring creative labour in media industries: Generative AI and cultural production

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The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence, and more recently of generative AI systems, is reshaping creative labour across cultural industries, particularly in fields such as art and advertising where symbolic production, aesthetic judgement, and authorship are central (Arielli & Manovich, 2022). Generative AI systems are increasingly embedded in professional creative routines as ideation supports, drafting tools, and visual generators. Rather than simply automating tasks, these systems intervene in how creative work is organised, evaluated, and accelerated, raising concerns about deskilling, standardisation, and the redistribution of creative agency.

This paper examines how creative workers experience and negotiate generative AI within everyday work practices. Moving beyond productivity-centred accounts, it approaches generative AI as a socio-technical and organisational infrastructure

that embeds norms, imaginaries, and evaluative criteria, redistributing agency across humans, models, datasets, and institutional constraints (Glăveanu, 2014). From this perspective, transformations of creative labour emerge through reconfiguration rather than substitution: tasks are decomposed, selectively delegated, and recomposed within AI-assisted workflows (Manovich, 2018).

Empirically, the study combines a scoping review of international literature on AI and creativity with semi-structured interviews conducted with creative professionals working in advertising. Interviews explore everyday uses of generative AI, perceived control and reliability, shifts in skill requirements, and negotiations around authorship, accountability, and aesthetic judgement (Zylinska, 2023). Artistic practices are used as a comparative reference to highlight alternative regimes of use, in which similar technologies are mobilised toward experimentation and critique rather than optimisation.

The analysis identifies three interrelated patterns. First, generative AI is commonly framed as an accelerator and exploratory device rather than a replacement for creative labour, intensifying temporal pressures while expanding the range of possible variations (Rosa, 2015). Second, creative work is increasingly organised around selective delegation and cognitive offloading: routine or repetitive tasks are assigned to AI systems, while human labour is repositioned around supervision, curation, and strategic sense-making. Although often described as empowering, these arrangements raise concerns about deskilling and the erosion of reflective time (Eslami et al., 2016; Bunz, 2023). Third, AI-assisted production contributes to the naturalisation of data-driven aesthetic norms, potentially reinforcing standardisation and bias while obscuring the organisational conditions under which creative outputs are produced (Arielli & Manovich, 2022).

By foregrounding ordinary creative practices, the paper shows that the implications of generative AI for creative labour take shape through incremental and negotiated reconfigurations of how work is organised, valued, and governed within media industries. It contributes to critical media industry studies by conceptualising creativity as a relational and distributed process, and by situating AI ethics within the everyday organisational arrangements through which responsibility, authorship, and value are practically redistributed.

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MIP04 Rethinking Media Industries: Methods, Concepts and Futures

PP 0439 Popular pleasures of tomorrow? Projecting the Cultural Economy

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What kind of cultural economy might we anticipate for the future? An expanded and unbridled 'culture industry' of capitalist corporations – the present-future writ large – or perhaps something else? Maybe a shrunken or 'degrown' economy of locally sustainable but restricted arts? Or, in amidst public austerity and ecological collapse, a world shorn of *all* cultural possibility, as we know it?

This talk addresses the idea of cultural industries in the future, and, more generally, what the cultural economy of the future might look like, and *feel* like. If we look at the usual way that is being cast – by national and EU governments, in industrial strategies, universities, or research funding agencies– it's wildly fixated on technology, immersive and digital experiences, AI, or on increasingly anodyne takes on the digital humanities and heritage. Paradoxically, these 'innovative' projections tend to assume strong forms of continuity – established social arrangements benignly enhanced by more 'ethical', 'smarter' and 'greener' technology. But these projections about the future are quite limited – both politically and in the range of intellectual perspectives they recognise or value. It seems reasonable to assume that there might be more inclusive, socially just, less destructive and radical alternatives to be had – and with more plural notions of culture and cultural production.

Yet if we look at the range of other, alternative or heterodox models of economy that have sprung up in the last two decades or so – based in notions of the 'well-being' economy, the foundational economy, or doughnut economics, as well as more radical approaches such as degrowth, or post-growth economies, and so on – they too have a limited range of understandings of culture and cultural industries; and I would say there too are various problems with the way these supposedly radical approaches are thinking about the look and feel of the cultural economy – especially the *popular* cultural economy (see Banks, 2022; Meissner, 2026; O'Connor, 2024, Soper, 2020).

In this talk I therefore explore some of the potentials – and pitfalls – of current projections of cultural economy futures in governmental discourse, and in cultural and media studies. A key goal – as I see it – is to generate a progressive cultural economy that can not only more equitably share and sustain scarce resources, but also retain some sense of *organized* cultural production as being a source of different aesthetic needs and desires. This, I would argue, must include tastes and preferences that are rooted in shared and globally extensive forms of popular culture – but in an ecologically endangered world how might the shared and popular pleasures of the future be made legible, communicable or even possible?

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MIP04 Rethinking Media Industries: Methods, Concepts and Futures

PP 0440 The benefits of breaking down silos – Discussing comparative studies of media industries

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The field of media industry studies has seen an increasing convergence across different industries and geographical areas in recent years. These trends have made media industries more intriguing but also more complex to understand and delineate. This paper aims to highlight the valuable insights that can be gained from a type of study, which is still rare in the literature of this field: the comparative study of media industries.

With this, we are not referring to transnational comparisons of media systems (e.g., in the style of Hallin & Mancini, 2004) but to studies that compare the differences and similarities between different media *industries*, for instance, in the style of Miège (1987; 1989) and Herbert, Lotz and Marshall (2019). The latter argues that much research on media industries is produced within "silos" specific to each industry (ibid.: 350) and that there is "extremely valuable insight to be gained" from comparative studies (ibid.: 362). However, as our theoretical discussion will show, despite their recommendation, comparative media industry studies remain rare. We argue that this is perhaps due to the tricky concept of "industry" and the difficulties involved in defining and delineating "media industries".

Our paper follows a two-part structure: The first part discusses and positions the existing literature on comparisons between different media industries, providing valuable discussions of how notable "key works" in media industries literature have addressed these issues (e.g., Deuze, 2007; Havens & Lotz, 2016; Herbert, Lotz, & Punathambekar, 2020; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). The second part describes the various approaches and research designs employed in comparative studies, highlighting gaps and blind spots that need to be addressed in the future. With this two-part structure, we address the following research question: *What different approaches are represented in the existing literature on comparative studies of media industries, and what gaps should future contributions in our field aim to fill?*

A key point in our discussion is that several contributions in the literature have overlooked comparisons between various media (or cultural) industries. Instead, they tend to discuss these industries in broader terms or place individual industries in separate chapters in anthologies, thereby also ignoring the direct comparisons and their value. Additionally, we consider how media convergence, as a phenomenon and concept, connects to these issues and how a promising approach has emerged from the literature on "platforms" (e.g., Cunningham & Craig, 2019; Poell, Nieborg, & Duffy, 2021), offering certain comparative perspectives that we will also include.

Our central argument is that comparative studies of different media industries are essential for *two primary reasons*: First, comparative studies help clarify what characterises media industries in general, including identifying industry-specific logics and practices. Second, conducting more comparative studies facilitates greater exchange of insights across industries and helps prevent the siloing of subfields related to each media industry.

In the final part, we draw on our own experiences and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of doing comparative studies, hoping that this will be both valuable and motivating to scholars and students seeking inspiration for their studies.

MIP04 Rethinking Media Industries: Methods, Concepts and Futures

PP 0441 What we don't talk about when we talk about digitalization: Towards the "what" and the "who" of the "broad cultural-technological" process

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The impact of digital technologies has been a major theme in media studies during the past three decades, following on a long tradition of studies on the role of technology in media and society (see, e.g., Bolter 1991; Negroponte 1995; Murray 1997; Rasmussen 2000; Manovich 2001; Thompson 2005; Benkler 2006; Hayles 2012; Lotz 2014; Hesmondhalgh 2019; Lotz & Havens 2025). More recently, the term "digitalization" has frequently been invoked in reference to "a broad cultural-technological process" (Colbjørnsen 2015; Brennen & Kreiss 2016). As a result, there is a risk of conflating diverse digitalization processes with potentially opposing outcomes, as well as underplaying the agency of the entities involved.

Looking at the media industries, we find that while some of industries have been quite digital since the end of the 1970's, most research on digitalization focus on the disruptive changes brought in the the last two decades. We also find a wide

range of digital technologies and processes that have been applied by diverse set of actors, both within and outside of the traditional media industries, across the value chain.

This paper explores two questions in this regard: Given this long timespan, are significantly different processes being conflated by broad cultural-technological definitions of digitalization? Are there analytical benefits of a more nuanced concept of digitalization?

In the current study, we have surveyed the academic and industry literature on digitalization of the media from 1990 to the present day, with a particluar focus on the Norwegian film and music industries. We have been looking for descriptions and explanations of observed historical developments, rather than arguments for likely future developments. These findings are then analyzed from an industrial perspective, which part of the media value chain is affected, as well a technological perspective, what are the affordances of the new technologies.

We find that changes to the media industries in the first three or four decades hardly get any mention in recent literature, while developments after cirka 2010 are considered revolutionary, such as online news, social media, music and video streaming, and the «platformization» of media. Further, the changes that have been considered most impactful tend to be driven by industry external entities and relate to how audiences get access to content.

Based on this study, we argue that the right way to analyze the changes related to digital media technology is to ask what is digitized and by whom, a view of technology as not being a determining force, but rather a range of possibilities that are exploited by different actors with different motives. These perspectives are important to bear in mind also when studying current developments in media industries such as platformization and the influx of artificial intelligence.

MIP04 Rethinking Media Industries: Methods, Concepts and Futures

PP 0442 Studying media institutions in motion: Knowledge graphs as a method for analysing discursive choice and institutional change

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Public service media institutions (PSM) are increasingly expected to account for how their editorial choices shape public understanding of culture, the economy, and the environment over time. Yet existing methods for analysing media performance remain largely fragmented: they focus on individual programmes, genres, or topics, rely on limited samples, and struggle to capture long-term discursive change across platforms. This paper reports on the nearly final results of a two-year project that addresses this gap by developing a fundamentally new research instrument to study, at scale, the historical evolution of a media institution's discursive choices. The same instrument could also become part of a new kind of public value provision by PSMs.

The project is carried out by Tallinn University and the Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) in collaboration. It constructs a knowledge graph-based representation of ERR's television, radio, and online output over a 10-year period. Using natural language processing tools and LLMs, it identifies and links cultural, economic, and environmental themes, various entities (people, institutional actors, locations), and their evolving relationships. Rather than treating media content as isolated texts, the approach conceptualises PSM as a dynamic, relational system in which discourses emerge, stabilise, and transform through recurring associations among topics, actors, places, and formats. The resulting graph does not merely store content metadata, but functions as an analytical model of the public sphere as produced by a single media institution.

The paper argues that this instrument enables a qualitative shift in how media institutions can be studied. It allows researchers to move from snapshot analyses of representation to longitudinal analyses of discursive trajectories: how certain themes become central or marginal, how the relationships between themes and people (both journalists and public figures) and institutions change, and how domains such as culture, economy, and environment converge or decouple. Importantly, this methodology enables the study not only of what PSM cover, but also of how their internal discursive architecture and professional constellations change in response to social, political, and ecological pressures.

Beyond academic research, the paper emphasises the broader public value implications of this approach. By design, the knowledge graph is conceived as an open, reusable infrastructure accessible to journalists, policymakers, educators, cultural institutions, and citizens. It enables new forms of institutional self-reflection for PSM, supporting evidence-based editorial discussion and accountability. At the same time, it creates opportunities for external stakeholders to explore how public issues have been framed historically, fostering transparency and informed public debate.

The paper positions knowledge-graph-based discursive analysis as a methodological innovation for communication research and as a novel mode of public value provision by PSM. It concludes by outlining how such infrastructures may redefine the relationship between media institutions, research, and society, enabling more reflexive, accountable, and historically grounded forms of public communication. The presentation will discuss the processes of the production of the graph, the collaboration between the researchers and the ERR, and initial analytic results exploring the graph and relationships between cultural, economic, and environmental topics.

MIP04 Rethinking Media Industries: Methods, Concepts and Futures

PP 0443 The backend of public AI: Infrastructural dependencies in the digital welfare state

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As a cornerstone of national and European digitalisation strategies, AI projects are being rolled out rapidly across the public sector as a key driver in developing high-quality solutions that uphold the principles of the EU and its vision of sovereignty (Mügge, 2024). With a consistent focus on accountability, quality, and economic growth, public AI is perceived as central to strengthening the position of national and regional IT sectors in a global market dominated by a handful of tech corporations (Coletti et al., 2025). However, the rapid pace of AI development, the surrounding infrastructural conditions, and the complex web of economic interests involved risk reproducing and reinforcing existing dependencies, vulnerabilities, and geopolitical asymmetries (Calderaro & Blumfelde, 2022). In other words, it is essential to critically consider and assess the stakes and possible lock-ins that accompany public AI procurement.

Contributing to this emerging research agenda, our paper presents an explorative analysis of the market structures, corporate interests, and infrastructural dependencies surrounding public AI projects in Denmark. Representing a heavily digitalised Scandinavian welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990), the implementation of digital technologies in the public sector balances between traditions of decommodification on the one hand, and market-based digitalisation strategies on the other. Our study provides empirical evidence of how these inherent tensions and conflicts of interest play out in the practical construction of the digital welfare state, while also providing an empirical and methodological baseline for future comparative studies of how AI-enabled welfare states might vary according to their institutional and ideological legacies as well as political and economic structures.

The study is based on a dataset comprising 147 public AI projects, developed and implemented across the public sector for a wide range of purposes. Developing a framework and methodology for identifying key market actors supplying AI infrastructure to the public sector, we first identify the official providers of AI solutions as they appear in public procurement notices, finding a landscape of largely national IT-firms and varying forms of public-private partnerships and collaborations (Laage-Thomsen et al., 2025). Zooming in on the technological design of these AI systems, including their embedded cloud infrastructures, model architectures, software dependencies, operating systems, APIs, and so forth, we uncover how global platform corporations act as inherent 'sub-contractors' for the public sector (Luitse, 2024; Van Der Vlist et al., 2024).

This approach allows us to cut across local "small tech" suppliers building and maintaining particular services, and global "big tech" corporations supplying the underlying infrastructural building blocks. A key focus in this investigation is the usage and implementation of, respectively, proprietary off-the-shelf software and open-source systems, and the different types of dependencies and power asymmetries they embed. As such, our study offers a bottom-up perspective on ongoing (top-level) discussions of digital sovereignty by foregrounding the dilemmas and path dependencies that local decision-makers and developers are faced with, while also situating specific AI projects in the global platform ecosystem where infrastructural power is obtained and exerted on multiple levels.

MIP05 Changing Patterns of Media Ownership: An Overview of the Evolving Landscape of Media Owners in Europe

PN 42 Media ownership in Portugal is evolving from media 'moguls' to entangled economic interests

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Media ownership in Portugal, in the democratic period, has, although with some delay, experienced the same trends visible in Western countries (Sousa & Silva, 2004), such as the consolidation of private interests and ownership concentration. The legal framework has been adapted to this scenario, with a few practical limitations to concentration (Silva, 2024). The Parliament has, in the meantime, issued one of the most advanced laws on media ownership transparency in 2015, anticipating some of the dispositions of the recently approved EMFA. Since the liberalization of markets, which began in the late 1980s, multimedia groups have grown through strategies of horizontal, vertical, and cross-ownership. These private, market-led, groups coexisted in a scenario with public broadcasting and with a Catholic radio-based group. These groups were initially led by a media-centric ownership chain, headed by media entrepreneurs. Private media is, however, facing significant challenges (Silva, 2019). The financial situation of most Portuguese media groups has deteriorated significantly over the last two decades. Profits are decreasing, negatively impacting the working conditions of journalists (Camponez & Oliveira, 2021). The competition with social media for consumer attention and advertising revenues has put media groups, which are unable to sustain alternative business models, under pressure. In this circumstance, a question arises: how has media ownership evolved in Portugal? This paper analyzes the media ownership trends of the last three decades to determine what challenges are now posed to news production. Based on a document analysis of the proprietary registry and further research on the economic and financial profiles of the companies that constitute the chains of ownership, this paper demonstrates that ownership is now characterized by a significant presence of non-media economic interests in the

ownership chain of the main Portuguese news outlets. Media groups are mostly owned by companies and businessmen with no prior connection to the journalistic world and limited knowledge of the specifics of media operations. The typical figure of a media mogul is vanishing in Portugal, and historical cases of media businessmen are no longer the pattern for media ownership. Non-media interests in Portuguese groups go from tourism to construction, goods distribution, and insurance companies, which entails significant risks of conflict of interest between the owners' position in some economic sector and the journalistic work to be performed by the outlets (Stetka, 2012). And, given that the Transparency Law does not cover economic operations not directly linked to the outlet, these interests may go undetected. The production of journalism thus faces new challenges that mandatory transparency of ownership, although necessary, does not address adequately.

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MIP05 Changing Patterns of Media Ownership: An Overview of the Evolving Landscape of Media Owners in Europe

PN 43 Consolidation or concentration of media ownership: New challenges for pluralism and diversity in the Danish media system

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In this paper, we explore how changes in the Danish media market have led to higher ownership concentration in a market already characterized by concentration. This is a challenge that is exacerbated by a lack media specific legislation with a focus on securing media pluralism and diversity (Kammer, 2017; Simonsen, 2025). The paper draws upon data from the Euromedia Ownership Monitor and the Reuters Digital News Report. The changes and challenges of media-ownership concentration play out differently form media system to media system (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2024). However, a common conclusion is that media ownership concentration is on the rise (Meier & Trappel, 2022). One dominant reason for such increase in ownership concentration is the ongoing struggle of the news industry to adjust its income in a market where most advertising revenues go to digital platforms rather than newspapers (Garz & Ots, 2025). As a result, mergers, acquisitions, collaborations, chain formation, and centralization have created media markets with increased ownership concentration across the EU. In Denmark, media-ownership concentration has traditionally been high in the audio-visual sector where state owned public service news media account for around 80 percent of the audience share (Simonsen, 2025). Private ownership has traditionally been less concentrated. However, this is now changing: in 2025, Berlingske Media was acquired by Norwegian conglomerate Amedia, and specialty brands like Altinget and Zetland were acquired by established media corporations like Swedish Bonnier News and JP/Politikens Hus, respectively. From the perspective of the media owners, these new developments are necessary strategic moves of consolidation. But at a systemic level, these consolidations lead to increased ownership concentration, which challenges media pluralism and diversity. This way, the paper demonstrates empirically how business consolidation leads to increased ownership contraction among leading Danish media brands (Schrøder, Blach-Ørsten & Eberholst, 2025).

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MIP05 Changing Patterns of Media Ownership: An Overview of the Evolving Landscape of Media Owners in Europe

PN 44 News media ownership arrangements and associated transparency risks in Austrian media landscape

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Media owners' power to shape media performance through strategy definition and resource allocation follows logics of institutional arrangements of news organisations (Benson et al., 2025; Sjøvaag & Ohlsson, 2019). On the one hand, the ownership forms give orientation to journalistic content (public service, amenity potential, profit); on the other hand, these arrangements can be coupled with different governance mechanisms that provide specific power constellations and entry points for influencing journalism. The Euromedia Ownership Monitor (EuroMo) assesses strict legal ownership as well as managerial, economic, and operational decision-making power risks to transparency. Using such a multidimensional approach, we explore transparency risks across different types of media ownership and sectors in Austria with EurOMo data on a sample of 30 influential mainstream media outlets and 34 news-related accounts on social media platforms. For the different types of media ownership, we rely on the categorisation by Benson and colleagues (2025), namely private, stock-traded market, public and civil society. Austrian public service media is strong, whereas, to a large extent, "private media companies in Austria either belong to the Catholic Church, the banking sector, or the super-rich (or a combination of those). In light of this diagnosis, the term 'independent media' seems increasingly threatened" (Pühringer et al., 2025, p. 19). With relatively well-developed and implemented legal ownership transparency requirements for media in all sectors and the four theorised media ownership forms present in its media system, Austria presents a good case for exploring risks hidden from the view through a strict transparency prism, that can be akin to a lesser or larger extent to different ownership forms. Thus, our contribution is two-fold. We first present media ownership types and their assets in Austria. Second, we analyse if multidimensional transparency risks are spread across the types in a balanced way or if some of the owner types gravitate to more risks in some dimensions. In this sense, the three most relevant conclusions that we will focus on are the following: (1) while all ownership forms share similar risks, public service media have some specific, unique ones, such as political interference via boards, which requires a deeper conceptualisation of Benson and colleagues' (2025) 'ownership complexes'; (2) on the other hand, all non-public ownership forms are evolving towards opaque ownership structures that make transparency of beneficial ownership ever unclear, at least in the formal sense; and (3) there are significant differences in risk levels in ownership and control transparency between national and regional media, indicating the continuing relevance of this differentiation in any account of media industries.

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MIP05 Changing Patterns of Media Ownership: An Overview of the Evolving Landscape of Media Owners in Europe

PN 45 The duality of Poland's media ownership transparency

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Media ownership transparency is a core value of the current EU legal framework and an essential driver of democratic societies. On the surface, recent European media regulation has underscored the critical importance of media plurality and relevant monitoring systems to combat concentration and enable the diversity of voices, including cultural, ideological, and political ones. While the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA), alongside the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), aim to disclose beneficial owners of both legacy and online-born media, media ownership transparency remains a challenge across Member States. This is due to the duality of regulatory systems and a culture of transparency, which can hinder the successful implementation of laws and policies (Donders, 2021). This paper examines the duality of media ownership transparency, using a case study of Poland, arguing that there is a mismatch between formal transparency compliance and persistent structural and cultural secrecy (Głowacki, 2025). The study draws on findings from the Euromedia Ownership Monitor 2025 (EurOMo 2025), a comparative research project co-funded by the European Commission that assesses risks to media ownership transparency across Europe. Focusing on Poland, the analysis covers 24 traditional news media outlets and 10 high-impact informational profiles operating on very large online platforms (VLOPs). Using EurOMo's multidimensional risk framework, the paper evaluates legal ownership transparency, economic control, management structures, relational influence, and public policy risks. Quantitative risk indicators are combined with

qualitative analysis of national regulatory arrangements, registry practices, and accessibility of ownership-related information. The findings reveal a moderate overall risk to media ownership transparency in Poland, with particularly elevated risks related to economic control and public policy. Despite extensive formal disclosure through company, court, and media registries, ownership structures are frequently fragmented, cross-border, and complex for citizens and journalists to interpret. These challenges are particularly relevant for platform-based news actors, whose visibility often relies on self-identification rather than on enforceable regulatory mechanisms, and who frequently fall outside traditional media regulation. The Polish case demonstrates how political polarisation, regulatory fragmentation, and platformisation complicate transparency in media ownership and control (Mikucki et al, 2024). By exposing the gap between legal transparency and meaningful public oversight, the paper contributes to debates on current developments in news media industries, highlighting the challenges posed by different media ownership forms (Mihejl & Stetka, 2024).

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MIP05 Changing Patterns of Media Ownership: An Overview of the Evolving Landscape of Media Owners in Europe

PN 46 Media ownership transparency in Romania: Modes of control in a hybrid media environment

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The Romanian media system has undergone several structural transformations in the past three decades. Total state control of the communist regime gave way in the nineties to a model dominated by “press barons” or moguls, leading to strong institutional capture in the post-communist period, particularly concentrated around control of major news televisions in the 2000s. This system has now evolved into a more diverse, pluralistic and fragmented landscape, in which traditional broadcasters coexist with a varied sector of digital-native outlets. The increase in diversity and pluralism coexists with new forms of instrumentalization and control. These include the nontransparent flow of public funds, primarily via political parties, but also inconsistent ownership transparency across the market. While audiovisual license holders are required to disclose their shareholder structures, ownership for digital-only outlets is opaque. The 2024–2025 electoral cycle also exposed severe vulnerabilities to platform-based capture, with the illegal lack of funding transparency for the online campaign, including by foreign state actors, leading to the annulment of the first round of presidential elections. The contemporary media environment is characterized by the coexistence of major televisions and the rising importance of the platforms as news sources. In this context, new forms of editorial control emerge. On the one hand, media projects can operate under brand umbrellas of established international or national outlets, without this influence being visible in the ownership chain recorded in the standard registers. The registered owners also frequently possess other interests other fields of activities, which can include real estate or industrial production, but also public relations, market research and telecommunications infrastructure, the latter signaling an emerging trend of convergence of news media with the telecom sector. Media projects can also function as social media accounts or networks of news influencers, creating forms of disintermediated political communication bypassing ownership transparency requirements. These phenomena create regulatory challenges only partially addressed by EMFA. National regulators for example have recently expanded their interpretation of online media content providers, moving towards assuming a responsibility to monitor public discourse online, while the forms of ownership and control via funding remain invisible. Based on examples from the Romanian case, we argue that understanding contemporary forms of capture, as well as achieving the regulatory aims of EMFA regarding ownership transparency requires rethinking both the concepts of ownership and that of editorial control, including standardizing forms of content ownership. Such transparency requirements are central to fulfilling the democratizing role of media pluralism.

MIP06 Media Ownership and Management in the Platform Era

PP 0634 Currents of control: Ownership evolutions in the submarine data cable industry

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With up to 99% of all intercontinental internet traffic travelling through fibre-optic cables below the sea (Mauldin, 2023), submarine networks constitute a critical backbone of digital societies. Creating significant dependencies and bottlenecks, submarine cables are objects of growing geopolitical and commercial interest, as exemplified by not only recent military interventions and espionage cases, but also by large-scale investments by global platform corporations. Expanding their market dominance from the application layer to the backbone layer, these new market leaders are not only “reshaping

the submarine cable industry" (Kang & Jacob, 2024) but also transforming the political economy of the global internet infrastructure in a broader sense.

In this paper, we present an empirical study of submarine data cable ownership from 1989 to 2028 (N = 804). Analysing the gradual buildout of new cable systems, shifts in market arrangements, and transformations of the underlying business models, we identify four main developments: first, we find a general proliferation of cables over time – even if some retire, many more enter, illustrating the growing demand for global internet traffic; second, we find an influx of companies from sectors outside of telecommunications reflecting the growing commercial and technological value of this infrastructural resource; third, we find a gradual decline in large consortia in favour of more concentrated ownership, often around a few powerful platform corporations, indicating a shift in the underlying business models and funding schemes; and finally, we see a rise in private cables, accompanying existing common-carrier cables, suggesting reconfiguration of the conditions for data routing.

Inspired by previous historical analyses of large-scale technological systems (Hughes, 1987), we interpret these empirical findings as reflecting three overarching phases in the evolution of the submarine data cable industry: an early phase from the 1980s to the early 2000s, characterised by the *transfer* of economic and technological resources from the legacy telecommunications sector to the emerging internet market; a middle phase of *growth* from approximately 2003 to 2018, marked by significant technological and commercial acceleration, increasing competition and disruption, and the appearance of new market entrants seeking to profit from the rising demand for data traffic; and finally, a third and ongoing phase of *momentum* where infrastructural power is stabilising around a new group of actors and the market conditions are being reconfigured. In extension of the already walled-off application ecosystems, the establishment of superior network infrastructure that can only be accessed through the usage of proprietary services suggests an emerging reintegration of the application and network layers that the internet originally separated.

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MIP06 Media Ownership and Management in the Platform Era

PP 0635 Ownership matters: A cross-sectional study of the relationship between news media ownership and individual trust in media in EU Member States

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Amid technological disruption of media markets, growing concentration and proliferation of alternative media ownership forms as a response to financial pressures, concerns about media ownership's influence in journalism quality have intensified. While research links ownership to content influences stemming from consolidation processes and institutional logics of ownership types (Benson et al., 2025; Fürst & Vogler, 2023; Hendrickx & Van Remoortere, 2022; Theine et al., 2025), less is known about how media ownership patterns, as a feature of media system, relate to individual trust in media. This study joins structuration approach in analysing how media system characteristics relate to individual trust responses to media (Fletcher et al., 2025). It aims to advance knowledge about media ownership influences and contextual determinants of trust in media.

The study employs institutional logics approach to media ownership (Benson et al., 2025) and multilevel modelling with the data from the Euromedia Ownership Monitor, coded to reflect shares of public, private, market, and civil society ownership at the country level and disaggregated on Eurobarometer survey data (2023, N≈16 700–18 000 across 22–25 EU countries depending on specification), to uncover links between media ownership structures and individual media trust.

Institutional trust in media is measured as both a binary trust indicator and a latent construct based on four trust-related items (validated for cross-national invariance). To address the compositional nature of ownership data, analyses use ownership-specific models, log-ratio transformations with private ownership as the reference, and cluster-based ownership patterns.

Across models and trust measures, private ownership dominance is associated with lower media trust, while public and market ownership are associated with higher trust, though private and public effects lose significance once press freedom is controlled for. In addition, political differences in media trust vary widely across countries and are systematically moderated by ownership structure: higher public ownership is associated with a lower trust among right-leaning individuals, higher private ownership – with a greater trust among the right. Despite sensitivity to model specification, the finding is robust: media ownership structure predictably shapes general trust and its polarization across countries.

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MIP06 Media Ownership and Management in the Platform Era

PP 0636 Media ownership across borders – The role of language in a cross-border acquisition of newspapers

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In 2023–2024, the ownership structure of Swedish-language newspapers in Finland changed significantly through a cross-border acquisition. The Swedish media corporation Bonnier News took control over six newspapers, leading to an ownership concentration with only a few Swedish-language newspapers currently remaining in domestic hands (Stenberg-Sirén et al., 2025). Acquisitions in the media sector are often driven by goals of cost consolidation and economies of scale (Sjøvaag & Ohlsson, 2019/2024), leading to ownership concentration. This offers smaller newspapers survival opportunities through group resources, but might also reduce editorial autonomy, create rigid structures, and decrease news diversity due to shared content (Ylikoski & Ala-Fossi, 2024; Lehtisaari et al., 2024).

Traditional media provide a platform for audiences to be informed, to be part of a community and to engage in democratic processes and public debate. This role is emphasized for audiences speaking a minority language, where the importance of media in the minority language is crucial for societal inclusion and language vitality (Cormack, 2013; Stenberg-Sirén, 2023; 2025). Research about media ownership changes seldom focuses on linguistic dimensions or minority media. While a shared language aids transnational collaboration, as shown by Hendrickx & Kammer (2024), research is lacking on how the owner's geographical and linguistic affiliation affects the media outlet's focus and role for the community.

In this study, we investigate what role language played in the decision-making about the acquisitions, how the shared language of Bonnier News and the Finland-Swedish newspapers influences the integration process and effects of the acquisition, and how the Swedish-speaking audience in Finland regards the change in ownership in relation to the vitality of the newspapers and the Swedish language in Finland.

First, through interviews with managers in Bonnier News, the Finland-Swedish newspapers and the foundations previously owning the newspapers (N = 18) we investigate the goals for the acquisition as well as the outcome. Our focus is on how the different stakeholders view the role of the shared language, the position of the newspapers as minority-language newspapers and what the newspapers might gain and loose by being part of a large media group in another country sharing their language.

Secondly, we analyse the views of the public. The study investigates whether a change from regional to cross-border newspaper ownership affects the media-audience relationship, and how the audience regards the possible effects of the change in ownership in relation to the vitality of the newspapers as well as the language. This is done through an online survey, with a representative sample of the Swedish-speaking adult population in Finland (N = 2469).

In the presentation, main findings of the audience reactions to the acquisition are discussed as well as management goals for, and results of, the acquisition that can be related to language aspects of the newspapers. We discuss if and how a commercial media owner in another country can strengthen the vitality of media working in a minority language.

MIP06 Media Ownership and Management in the Platform Era

PP 0637 Risky choice framing in media management: from "AI is coming" to "AI is infrastructure"

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This paper analyses the strategic shift in Nordic media management towards artificial intelligence (AI) during a period of four years, from 2023 to 2026. The analysis covers the changing framing in media organisations during a time period that

began with the launch of OpenAI's service ChatGPT in November 2022, a moment of awakening that can be labelled as "AI is coming", then rapidly leading to a dominant frame of "AI is infrastructure".

Nordic media companies are considered forerunners in the application of AI in newsrooms, especially when it comes to sharing best practices between organisations (Deck, 2025). Manifesting this spirit of open collaboration is the Nordic AI Journalism Network, which since 2023 has held the annual Nordic AI in Media Summit (NAMS) in Copenhagen, a key forum not just for regional media but also for global dialogue on the role of AI in the news industry.

The empirical data consists of six days (42 hours) of presentations and panel discussions at four NAMS conferences in 2023–2026. We apply qualitative framing analysis to examine how the discussion on AI in the Nordic media industry has evolved and what specific frames have been present. In addition, we use the same method to analyse blog posts, for instance on Linkedin, and industry reports making sense of the summit proceedings. The empirical material is well structured since the NAMS conferences proceedings follow the same design, with some of the keynote presenters having appeared every year. Because of the uncertainty around AI we focus on media management and risky choice framing, a field that calls for decisions in terms of risk options phrased as gains or losses (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; D'Angelo, 2017).

The analysis is guided by two research questions:

RQ1 How has the framing of AI at NAMS conferences changed during 2023–2026?

RQ2 How do representatives from the Nordic media industry make sense of the frame "AI is infrastructure" and what visions are present?

In our analysis, we find a transition from a focus on specific tools and limited experiments with AI to improving efficiencies in editorial processes and then to a transformative shift ending in the recognition that AI is actually becoming the infrastructure of the media industry, underpinning a new information ecology and transforming publishing models. This awareness is in line with industry reports showing how AI is becoming embedded across the entire information chain—from how news is gathered to how it is produced, distributed, and ultimately consumed (Caswell & Fang, 2024).

However, we also critically scrutinize the seemingly shared vision that AI is mostly about generative AI and note that the tightened relationship with tech companies in Silicon Valley such as Open AI creates lock-in effects and path dependencies that might capture the future of media companies for many years to come. Finally our analysis presents a scenario where AI is emerging as a key mediator of information flows, shaping production and interpretation despite severe risks such as unresolved accuracy issues (Bender & Hanna, 2025; EBU, 2025; Simon et al., 2025).

MIP06 Media Ownership and Management in the Platform Era

PP 0638 Shaping Public Service Media strategies in the platform era: Negotiating dominant logics in managerial decision-making on public service online content curation in Flanders

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The competition Public Service Media (PSM) face is no longer limited to traditional broadcasting companies, as international streaming services, video-sharing platforms, and social media have come to dominate the media industry (Poell, Nieborg & Van Dijck, 2019). In response, PSM in Europe have been adopting digital-first strategies, in which their broadcaster video-on-demand (BVOD) services become primary gateways to content and online content curation becomes a strategic focal point (Iordache et al., 2024).

Such strategic shifts result from managerial strategic decision-making and are shaped by what Prahalad and Bettis (1986) call a dominant logic (DL): "the way in which managers conceptualise the business and make critical resource allocation decisions—be it in technologies, product development, distribution, advertising, or in human resource management" (p. 490). The DL is inextricably linked to the core activities of an organisation and must be revised when structural changes occur in these activities, as is currently the case for PSM (D'Arma et al., 2021).

However, a DL is also inherently path-dependent and not necessarily uniformly interpreted throughout the organisation (Lowe & Maijanen, 2019; Maijanen, 2015). Revising a DL for PSM organisations—some with a broadcasting legacy tracing back a century—through managerial strategic negotiations involving i.a. editors, public value strategists and technologists, can thus become a difficult endeavour. Therefore, our central research question is: what DL guides PSM managers shaping BVOD strategies in a rapidly evolving digital media industry? Unpacking the key components of the definition of DL by Prahalad and Bettis (1986), we answer the question by determining i) who is involved in strategic decision-making, ii) what their different conceptualisations of the core activities are, and iii) how managerial negotiations eventually result in strategic decisions. This study contributes to research on PSM adapting strategically to a platformised media environment, adding a new dimension to it by investigating the managerial thinking that shapes PSM strategies.

To obtain granular insights into the complex strategic negotiations at PSM, the research relies on a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2006) of the DL underlying the content curation strategy of the BVOD of Flemish public broadcaster VRT (VRT MAX). We rely on a qualitative mixed-methods approach combining a document analysis of relevant strategic texts (managerial contracts, year reports, parliamentary reports, press statements) and semi-structured interviews with approximately 10 top and

middle managers involved in the strategic decision-making processes in question. Despite VRT's introduction of a digital-first strategy, preliminary findings reveal that the organisation remains predominantly inspired by a broadcasting logic. The online curation is rather motivated by the idea of "keeping everyone in the company happy"—explaining the large share of editorial intervention—than by a public service rationale adapted to the platform era.

Through this study, we expand on the application of the managerial concept of dominant logic at PSM, as previously done by Lowe and Maijanen (2019). Ultimately, we aim to provide insight into how long-term delivery on the public service remit of PSM can be ensured in a context of digital disruption, financial precarity and societal polarisation.

MIP07 Media Production across Contexts: Creators, Platforms and Representation

PP 0735 The article provides insights into the creator economy in German-speaking countries, which has been little researched to date

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Over the past years, the creator economy has developed into a lucrative sector within the cultural industry. Besides, major content creators are celebrated like superstars. Many children and young people aspire to become content creators. They are considered popular, well-known, have flexible working hours and do what they love. Nevertheless, content creators face similar uncertainties to those working in other cultural fields. Added to this are platform risks characteristic of social media, such as algorithmic control, very low barriers to entry and the need to present oneself as an independent brand. However, there is a significant research gap in this area in German-speaking countries. Even though social media is part of many communication science analyses, the creators themselves, i.e. those who have a significant impact on the social media economy, are rarely included.

This paper presents the results of the Creator Careers project, in which we focus on the careers of content creators. We explore the following questions: How is the creator economy shaping up in German-speaking countries? How do content creators operate in this highly uncertain market?

In this project, we examine the creator economy from the perspectives of critical media industry studies and economic sociology of cultural productions. We conduct expert interviews with content creators and agency employees and carry out quantitative channel analyses for selected channels. In addition, we research data on the three platforms YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. For YouTube, we can draw on data from a previous project that allows us to map the development of YouTube in Austria since 2017.

The individual paper focuses on presenting the results of the expert interviews (as of December 2025: 23 interviews; more planned) and the data collected on the three platforms. Based on the current status, first results from the channel analysis could also be included.

The results show that the institutionalization and recognition of the creator economy is at different stages of advancement in the DACH countries. In addition, the Austrian advertising market is smaller than the German one, which is why Austrian creators are less sought-after cooperation partners than their German colleagues. Furthermore, it is becoming apparent that the creator economy is not as diverse and entry into it is not as barrier-free as is often assumed. In addition, different globalization and localization trends can be observed on the platforms.

Within the Creator Sphere, there are platform-specific bubbles that are divided into further bubbles. Only in very few cases did creators pursue a career as influencers from the outset. They are aware of the uncertain work situation and therefore usually build up additional sources of income or continue to work to a limited extent in their trained professions. The existence of a monetization programme on the platforms has a decisive influence on the choice of platform used and the volume in which they are used. In Austria, for example, there is no Creator Fund for TikTokers, but there is one in Germany.

MIP07 Media Production across Contexts: Creators, Platforms and Representation

PP 0736 Production perspectives on children's television: In-depth interviews on representation and its emergence through micro-, meso-, and macro-level processes

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Children's television is not only entertainment but also a site of meaning-making and formative upbringing of next generations. Research on media production predominantly focuses on adult-oriented content, downplaying the relevance and value of children's television. This ongoing study addresses this gap and researches how contemporary children's television is shaped and how current representational practices within this distinctive genre unfold. This study draws on 16 in-depth expert interviews with professionals working in children's television across diverse production roles, demographic backgrounds, and geographical settings. For the latter, a cross-cultural comparative approach was adopted, focusing on production practices in the United States and in Flanders, the Dutch speaking Northern part of Belgium, thus tapping into large and small industry markets. This approach provides direct insight into the lived experiences of creators and decision-makers,

including how they conceptualize children as an audience and how they define the core characteristics of children's content within their respective production environments.

Our interviewees situated their production practices within a rapidly changing media landscape, underscoring the need for continuous, production-focused research that keeps pace with evolving industrial and audience dynamics. They acknowledge that streaming services have disrupted traditional production and distribution models, while pointing out emerging challenges and opportunities such as YouTube, social media, and the increasing popularity of Asian media products. Across interviews, four interrelated themes emerged as central to both children's television content and its intended audience: recognizability, entertainment, connection, and social impact. Additionally, the analysis found a complex interplay of production factors, on macro-, meso-, and micro-level.

For this abstract, due to space limitation, we focus only on one of those themes, namely recognizability. Both American and Flemish producers emphasized the importance of content that children can easily recognize and identify with, yet they approached this goal differently according to their local contexts. At the micro level, American and Flemish creators drew on their own personal experiences and observations of children's everyday lives, highlighting familiar locations and use of language. At the meso level, production teams negotiate these insights during collaborative meetings, balancing creative ideas with economic considerations. In the U.S., decision-makers consider the large and diverse domestic market, whereas in Flanders, teams strategically integrate audience engagement practices, such as on-screen presenters and live events, to strengthen recognition and interaction. At the macro level, interviewees refer to broader cultural, policy and industrial factors shaping their production decisions: the scale and diversity of the American market facilitate global exportability, reflecting beneficial economies of scale, while Flemish institutional support and cultural priorities reinforce localized strategies that render children's content culturally specific.

In sum, our cross-cultural analysis demonstrates that in the post-streaming era of children's television recognizability is not merely a feature of content but emerges from the dynamic interplay of personal experiences, organizational structures, and wider cultural and industrial conditions of content creators. By mapping these interconnections, this study contributes to ongoing debates within production studies and children's media research, offering insight into the practices that shape the stories and characters that children encounter on screen.

MIP07 Media Production across Contexts: Creators, Platforms and Representation

PP 0737 Between desire and resistance: The multidimensionality of digital disconnection practices among Italian musicians in the platformed music industry

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The growing platformisation of cultural and creative industries poses significant challenges to creative workers, forcing them to maintain constant visibility and conform to algorithmic logic (Duffy, 2020). This pressure is perceived as a form of subordination to platform power, a condition considered "necessary" for self-promotion and establishing a professional presence within a highly competitive ecosystem. While extant literature (Duffy et. al., 2019; Poell et al., 2021) extensively details the consequences of platformisation on creative work, the specific disconnection practices employed by creative workers to cope with the algorithmic pressure remain largely unexplored. Framed as an intervention in the field of disconnection studies, this research examined the effective practices employed by Italian musicians to regain their work-life balance and reassert control over time and agency. Drawing on 20 semi-structured interviews (average length 45 minutes), conducted remotely between July 2025 and November 2025, the study categorized respondents into three structural types: solo artists, multi-level musicians and bands.

The findings reveal distinct approaches and practices based on structural positioning. For soloists, the fear of missing out job opportunities exerts a powerful nudge, making the desire to disconnect something unfeasible and anxiety-inducing. Indeed, the pressure to remain constantly connected to seek work and build a reputation may be more pronounced for emerging artists. Furthermore, the ethics of remaining present on certain platforms like Spotify is negotiated with the need to be connected for promotional or contractual reasons. On the other hand, multi-level musicians, operating on multiple contexts mediate the possibility of disconnection on their reputational capital. This variable enacts the discriminating factor in both voluntary (e.g. do not use Instagram on the mobile device) and involuntary disconnections (e.g. unexpected closure of a social media account). Finally, bands are more inclined to radically disconnect from streaming platforms or social media. In particular, the decision to remove their own music from streaming platforms is often interpreted as an act of resistance towards the dominant consumption model or against the platform itself. To counterbalance their permanent absence from mainstream platforms, bands adopt a range of alternative practices to communicate their activities or promote their music, including blogs, newsletters, or uploading their music for free streaming/download on platform deemed "more ethical" (e.g. Bandcamp).

The theoretical conceptualization of these disconnection practices yields a multidimensional continuum integrating four fundamental components: the nature of disconnection practices (i.e., desired versus enacted), their duration (i.e., temporary versus permanent), the underlying moral orientation (i.e., negotiation/optimisation of platform values versus

resistance to them), and the musicians' reputational capital (i.e., low versus high). The continuum is further shaped by the structural positioning of the musicians themselves, where the distinction between operating as a soloist, a multi-level musician or belonging to a band is substantial. Ultimately, this study argues that disconnection is not only an individual choice, but constitutes a political act shaped by economic power dynamics and the structural position of musicians within the increasingly platformed music industry (Bonini & Magaudda, 2024).

MIP07 Media Production across Contexts: Creators, Platforms and Representation

PP 0738 Filming historical fiction at traumatic heritage spaces in an era of cultural polarization: a production ethnography of WWII drama 'Breendonk' (2026)

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This paper examines how European television productions negotiate cultural trauma for historical fiction. The historical drama 'Breendonk', reimagines the complex history of Belgian collaboration, resistance, and passivity under the Nazi regime. It has been established in the fields of memory and media studies that in an era of crisis, where right-wing extremism is on the rise in the West, the need to revisit and mobilize history to understand the present is amplified (de Groot, 2015). 'Breendonk' refers to the namesake WWI military fortress that was repurposed by German occupation as concentration camp in Belgium during WWII. Today, the notoriously cruel Nazi Auffanglager central to Belgian collective memory, functions as human rights memorial site where curatorial strategies and guided tours aim to foster an emotional and 'realistic' representation of the 'Hell of Breendonk' (Spiessens, 2024). Yet, this is the first time Fortress Breendonk's story leaves the site in the form of historical fiction television.

The series is exemplary of how different social, cultural and political imperatives shape mnemonic myths but is also a reaction to global streaming pressures felt in small media markets such as Dutch-speaking Belgium (Raats & Jensen, 2021). The co-production is born form the NEW8 alliance, formed by eight European public service media, which aims to safeguard the quality of local fiction and its reach (VRT, 2025). However, access to such sensitive grounds symbolic for cultural violence, isn't straight-forward for filming (Hirsch, 2002). In fact, 'Breendonk' is the first fiction series to attain permission to film at the original concentration camp depicted. Incidentally Auschwitz-Birkenau, predominant setting of Holocaust narratives, released a 3D-rendering of its site destined for filming during field work for this study (Oltermann, 2025). Opening sites of cultural trauma for popular mythification still heightens concerns with ethics, authenticity, sensitivity and commodification. Even so, some critics resort to sacrilege as reproach. This shift proves a relevant but contested topic for exploration regarding TV production practises at cultural sites and places of traumatic memory.

The study contributes to production studies, European media studies, and critical memory studies and investigates how changing needs for collective remembering recourse attitudes regarding the presence and exploitation of popular media at historical sites of trauma. Further, it seeks to understand how European production of historical fiction functions with geographies and narratives marked by cultural trauma. Methodologically, the study addresses the gap in media production ethnography (Marinos, 2025) and combines on-site observations and expert interviews with both production workers and heritage practitioners associated with the filming locations (Jensen, 2013). Findings reveal tensions between dominant institutional strategies and personal tactics negotiating shifts in ethics, cultural responsibility, artistry and industry norms. By nuancing the broader structure-agency debate, the study contributes to critical dialogue on how creative and historical practises navigate social responsibility and globalization in times of crisis. Challenges concerning site management, display of contested symbolism, and representation are joined by ideological debates surrounding economic and political instrumentalization of cultural trauma.

MIP08 Generative AI in Media Industries: Work, Agency and Transformation

PP 0869 AI-infused talks: Adopting and adapting to Generative AI in everyday work of digital creative professionals

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In the rapid rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), digital creative professionals have not only encountered GenAI as reshaping their industry but, as early adopters, have also begun shaping its practical applications. Existing research explores how creative professionals perceive GenAI in their work (Li et al., 2024), considers its general impact on workflows (Pearson, 2023), and examines emerging divisions of labour (Clarke & Joffe, 2025). While the latter highlights the workspace-dependent character of this phenomenon, these studies leave underexplored the everyday negotiations and sense- and meaning-making surrounding GenAI within professional practices in organisational contexts.

To understand how GenAI is adopted and adapted in situ, this paper asks: How do digital creative professionals integrate and naturalise GenAI use in their daily work, and how are these practices embedded within specific organisational contexts? Situating these processes within a broader context of digital disruption, shifting professional identities, and accelerating futures, the study draws on ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, including observations, qualitative interviews, and analysis of digital artefacts. It introduces a case study of art directors, designers, and copywriters working in selected communication,

creative, and advertising agencies in Malmö, Sweden. The paper thus examines both the digital material affordances of GenAI and how professionals actively constitute these as meaningful within their practices.

By investigating how professionals make sense of, resist, or embrace GenAI, this paper demonstrates that the integration of GenAI into everyday work is project-dependent and primarily occurs through what I term "negotiations." These negotiations unfold across four levels: (1) dialogue with one's professional self (and often with GenAI itself); (2) dialogue with the internal project team; (3) dialogue with the extended project team, including client representatives; (4) exchanges with peer professionals to share experiences and best practices. Such negotiations balance technological affordances with personal professional values, organisational priorities, budgets, team skills, aesthetic perspectives, and industry trends. Their outcomes are inherently unique, enabling the formation of situational, project-based configurations where human and non-human actors collaborate. Preliminary findings reveal emerging pathways through which creative labour is reorganised, mediated, and reimagined – demanding a high level of (self)reflexivity and flexibility from creatives and their workplaces. The paper argues that understanding these everyday engagements, which highlight not only vulnerabilities but also resilient strategies for navigating uncertainty, is essential for grasping how creative media industries are being reshaped. This study provides a situated account of how GenAI becomes meaningful in practice, offering media research a lens for examining the lived, negotiated realities of technological adoption and the trajectories along which professional practices evolve.

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MIP08 Generative AI in Media Industries: Work, Agency and Transformation

PP 0870 Generative liveness: contingency and uncertainty in live coding and AI-driven performance

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The increasing presence of generative algorithmic systems in today's media landscape reveals an ambivalent relationship with the management of uncertainty. On the one hand, the uncertainty produced by the overabundance of options that characterizing contemporary society (Luhmann, 1991; Beck, 1992) tends to be mitigated through probabilistic calculation: in everyday life, algorithms operate to reduce the indeterminacy of the present, guiding decision-making toward what is considered the optimal choice in a given situation. On the other hand, within the live performing arts, algorithms can become agents that allow practitioners and audiences to inhabit the contingency of the present and transform it into a shared experience. Indeed, given the current centrality of liveness within artistic and cultural production (Gemini & Brilli, 2023), uncertainty acquires a desirable and deliberately sought-after communicative value. It is within this tension – between algorithms employed as technologies of risk reduction in everyday life and algorithms reactivated as generators of unpredictability in performative contexts – that this contribution is situated. Despite the growing scholarly debate on algorithmic agents and live forms, their intersections remain underexplored from a sociological perspective, particularly with regard to the role these systems play in producing and valorizing uncertainty during the time of the live event.

Building on Philip Auslander's notion of *digital liveness* (2012), this research adopts the concept of *generative liveness* to refer to a form of liveness produced by generative algorithmic processes and sustained by the interactions they activate throughout the duration of the performance. On the basis of this definition, the paper addresses the following research question: what kind of contingency does generative liveness produce in the performing arts, and how does it differ from the contingency generated by human agents or other technical artifacts?

To investigate this question, the analysis is based on a comparison between two different performative modes of live interaction with algorithms: *AI-driven performances* and *live coding* practices. The former refers to artistic and theatrical performances grounded in live communication with an AI system that is trained and programmed prior to the event, while the latter consists of performances in which the very process of writing and programming the algorithm is carried out in real time as part of the performance itself.

In addition to the comparative analysis of these performative practices, the research draws on twelve interviews with artists, event organizers, and audience members. The plurality of perspectives collected allows for an in-depth examination of how algorithmic training and coding are configured both technically and methodologically, and enables an understanding of how the contingency produced by artificial communication (Esposito, 2017, 2022) is valorized and rendered meaningful within artistic contexts.

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MIP08 Generative AI in Media Industries: Work, Agency and Transformation

PP 0871 House-training the AI-agent: A domestication perspective on AI-agents in a professional setting

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This paper draws on experiences from a series of workshops designed to train small and mid-sized businesses in building AI agents, using these experiences as a case study for discussing attempts at domesticating generative AI. An AI agent is an autonomous system that utilizes large language models to reason, plan, and act towards specific goals. 2025 has been described as "the year of the AI agent," as LLMs become better, cheaper, and faster; integration between different programs and tools is made simpler; and the launch of user-friendly tools enables the creation of agents. AI agents can be utilized for repetitive processes with multiple steps, with examples found in customer service and support, marketing and content, project management and follow-up, data analysis and reporting, and administration and scheduling. In the fall of 2025, the authors of this paper were hired to review and document a series of workshops where small and medium-sized businesses developed their own AI agents for business and consumer communication. This series of seminars – referred to as an "Innovation Sprint" – gives a unique opportunity to look into the process of domestication of a novel technology on a micro-scale, allowing us to explore how the assumedly disruptive force of generative AI is conceptualized and made sense of in a setting that is practice-oriented, and focused on finding ways to employ new technologies to solve or alleviate concrete problems.

This paper aims to draw on experiences and observations from the innovation sprint to engage in a broader discussion about domestication theory and sense-making, to contribute to a deeper understanding of the social and cultural implications of generative AI. Research questions: What prior AI competence did participants have, and what did they expect from an AI agent? What does the experience of building and training AI agents disclose in terms of generative AI as a medium? How can the activities in the AI agent innovation sprint be understood from a domestication perspective?

Participating companies were small, with 1–2 employees, and their budgets for marketing, as well as the time allocated for marketing, were limited. They lack the time and expertise to do it themselves, but they also lack the resources to hire professional services. It is in this gap that AI agents can appear as an attractive solution for automating and delegating difficult and time-consuming processes. However, the findings of our study show that, while participants' hopes were high, there is a gap between what is theoretically and technically feasible and what has actually been done in practice. One challenge with training an AI agent is that it fundamentally requires a different type of interaction with the computer and very different content production. To be successful, the user needs to think more like a programmer than a content producer, as it involves giving a computer program instructions that must be constantly corrected (i.e., debugging) to deliver the desired result. The paper ends with a discussion about these findings in the context of domestication theory and media ecology.

MIP08 Generative AI in Media Industries: Work, Agency and Transformation

PP 0872 A second stage of participation: Studying audience chats in participatory theatre projects

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In recent years, messaging apps like WhatsApp and Telegram have taken on an increasingly central role. Unlike traditional social networks such as Facebook or Instagram, which structure interactions around public posts and algorithmic visibility, messaging apps facilitate more private and continuous exchanges.

Beyond their role in everyday communication, messaging apps have been explored as methodological tools for qualitative research, including focus groups (Chen & Neo 2019; Colom 2022) and diaries (Schönbächler 2023). They can offer more flexible, inclusive, and sustainable environments compared to traditional data collection methods, though they are not without disparities in communication participation.

These platforms are becoming essential spaces for organization and engagement also within artistic and cultural contexts. Moreover, in the field of performing arts, they are being utilized as mediums for interactive performances. Projects like Teatropostaggio on Telegram by the Pallaksch Collective (2024) or the WhatsApp-based dance project Call My Name by

Fabrizio Favale / Le Supplici (2020) demonstrate that these spaces are not merely tools for coordination and discussion but also creative devices that shape new forms of digital liveness (Gemini, Brilli 2023; Giuliani 2023; Gemini, Giannini & Giuliani 2024).

Despite the growing use of messaging apps in the artistic landscape, research on their impact in facilitating discussion about performing arts remains limited. This contribution presents results from the research project Cultural Welfare Ecosystems for Wellbeing: Mapping Semantics and Practices, Co-designing Tools, and Raising Awareness, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research (MIUR) and NextGenerationEU. It analyzes WhatsApp's functions as a tool for coordination, staging, audience engagement, and qualitative research in participatory performing arts projects. Specifically, it addresses the following questions: 1) What are the limits and potentials of WhatsApp chats in action-research on participatory artistic projects? 2) How do the affordances of chats shape pre- and post-performance experiences? To answer these questions, we analysed through qualitative e quantitative content analysis and interviews with organisers three case studies of chats lasting from four months to one year: BAT - Bottega Amletica Testoriana, Sognando Apiria, and Dance Well, each characterized by different modes of audience participation. WhatsApp proves to be an effective tool for action-research and co-design, particularly in extending participants' experiences and reflective processes. Asynchronous exchange becomes a form of listening and co-constructing meaning, pushing back against the logics of impact-driven commodification that often constrain participatory projects built around short-term engagement.

However, challenges emerge in balancing focused discussions with off-topic conversations, freedom of expression with inhibition due to the research group's presence, and the dynamics between active users and lurkers. While the asynchronicity of chats provides more space for reflection on the experience, it may also generate an expectation of "competitive performativity" among users.

MIP08 Generative AI in Media Industries: Work, Agency and Transformation

PP 0873 Generative artificial intelligence and media ecosystems: Disruption, value reconfiguration, and creative agency in the digital economy

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Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has emerged in the first half of the 2020s as a profoundly disruptive force within the media and creative industries, reshaping not only production practices but also the economic, cultural, and regulatory foundations of contemporary media ecosystems. By automating and augmenting creative processes, enhancing personalization and recommendation systems, and transforming content distribution, monetization, and audience engagement, GenAI alters the traditional digital media value chain from creation to consumption. Its impact is particularly acute at the creative and consumption ends of this chain, where questions of authorship, value capture, and cultural diversity become increasingly contested.

This paper approaches GenAI as a technology-based disruptive innovation and examines its effects through a techno-economic ecosystems framework. This perspective emphasizes value creation as an outcome of interactions among heterogeneous actors—creative professionals, technology firms, platforms, users, and regulators—whose roles and interdependencies are being rapidly reconfigured. Rather than focusing on a single sector, the study adopts a cross-sectoral approach, arguing that common disruption vectors can be identified across advertising, music, audiovisual content, videogames, news media, and creator economies.

GenAI's influence is fundamentally ambivalent. On one hand, it lowers barriers to entry and democratizes access to creative tools, enabling broader participation in cultural production and potentially fostering diversity and experimentation. On the other hand, these same processes risk reinforcing new forms of re-intermediation, as value and control shift toward proprietary infrastructures, data ownership, and algorithmic governance. Creative agency increasingly takes the form of hybrid human–machine collaboration, where authorship is reframed as curation, prompting a redefinition of the creator's identity and professional status.

The paper identifies five transversal challenges affecting media ecosystems: (1) the redefinition of creative identity and authorship; (2) the transformation of business and distribution models and the redistribution of value; (3) the migration of value creation from creative labour to technological capacities; (4) unresolved regulatory dilemmas concerning privacy, intellectual property, and derivative works; and (5) growing tensions between expanded participation and aesthetic homogenization driven by algorithmic standardization and hyper-personalization.

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed exploratory design with a strong qualitative emphasis. It combines a systematic review of academic and gray literature, a structural-functional analysis of selected media ecosystems, focus groups with users, and surveys and in-depth interviews with industry experts. This design allows for the identification and validation of disruption vectors across creative, economic, regulatory, and consumption dimensions.

The expected findings suggest that GenAI is accelerating a structural reconfiguration of the media ecosystem characterized by techno-creative intermediation, regulatory lag, and ethical opacity. While GenAI expands creative possibilities, it simultaneously concentrates power and value within technological actors, challenging existing governance frameworks.

The paper concludes that understanding GenAI's impact requires an ecosystemic, cross-sectoral perspective capable of informing more balanced regulatory and governance responses that reconcile innovation with cultural sustainability and creative diversity in the AI era.

MIP10 Vulnerability, Responsibility and Resilience in Cultural and Media Industries

PP 0975 Responsible digital practices in cultural and creative industries: Frictions, reconfigurations and socio-ecological imaginaries

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Recently, calls for "responsible" or "sustainable" digital practices have increasingly structured public discourse, regulatory frameworks and professional norms across media and cultural sectors. While these debates often focus on the environmental footprint of digital technologies, less attention has been paid to the ways in which cultural and creative industries (CCIs) interpret, negotiate and reconfigure these injunctions in relation to their specific modes of production, values and imaginaries. This paper addresses this gap by examining how responsible digital practices are articulated, appropriated or resisted within the field of CCIs, with a particular focus on digital arts and creative production.

The paper draws on empirical research conducted within the French research project *Renum* (https://renum.parisnanterre.fr/, *Reconfiguring Digital Practices for the Ecological Transition: Professions and Skills*), which investigates socio-ecological transformations of digital practices across sectors. Focusing on CCIs as a heuristic field, the study combines a mixed qualitative methodology. First, we carried out a digital ethnography of the online discourses and practices of 100 French cultural and creative organisations (theatres, festivals, art centres, artistic NGOs, professional networks, etc.) identified on the basis of national listings of digital arts actors. We then sent a questionnaire to these organisations, collecting 30 responses, which were complemented by fifteen semi-structured interviews with professionals working in these organisations. This methodological triangulation allows us to analyse both declared commitments and situated professional practices, as well as the tensions between symbolic positioning and operational constraints. The analysis aims to distinguish between corporate social responsibility commitments, ecological engagement, inclusive socio-ecological initiatives, accessibility policies, and queer and feminist engagements related to the uses of digital technologies, both by organisations and by the artists they host.

Our findings show that responsible digital practices in CCIs cannot be reduced to environmental optimisation or "green" technological fixes. Instead, they are embedded in broader socio-ecological framings that intersect with long-standing concerns around labour conditions, accessibility, territorial inequalities and cultural diversity. Professionals mobilise heterogeneous repertoires to make sense of responsibility, ranging from digital sobriety and infrastructural reduction to commitments against discrimination, queer and crip approaches to creation, and efforts to improve accessibility for marginalised publics. These engagements, however, are marked by persistent frictions: between artistic experimentation and technical standardisation, between economic precarity and ethical commitments, and between institutional frameworks and grassroots professional cultures.

By situating responsible digital practices within cultural production, this paper aims to outline possible futures for the sector as it copes with socio-ecological and digital transitions. It argues that CCIs offer a privileged observatory for understanding how these transitions are translated into professional identities, skills and cultural imaginaries, revealing both the limits and the transformative potential of current responsibility discourses in media industries.

MIP10 Vulnerability, Responsibility and Resilience in Cultural and Media Industries

PP 0976 Hands on data: Rural Chinese women's embodied and intersectional data labor in distribution centers

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Logistics systems are essential to the operation of platform economies, particularly e-commerce platforms, and they rely heavily on data for tracking and surveillance, automation, optimization, and "smart" decision-making in the allocation of logistical resources. Existing scholarship on data labor has primarily focused on precarious and invisible forms of "ghost work" that underpin digital platforms, including content moderation, data annotation, AI training, and the maintenance of digital infrastructures (Cant et al., 2024; Gray & Suri, 2019; Taylor, 2023). This literature has also highlighted global North–South inequalities that shape and are reproduced through the outsourcing of low-paid data labor (Le Ludec et al., 2023). However, little attention has been paid to data labor within logistics systems. This absence further sustains what West (2022) terms "distribution fetishism," whereby platforms obscure the labor and material infrastructures that enable frictionless consumer experiences. Moreover, intersectional inequalities shape logistics data labor in distinct ways: my fieldwork shows that data entry, repair, and maintenance work in distribution warehouses are largely performed by poorly paid rural women in precarious, part-time positions under intense surveillance.

This project examines data labor performed by rural Chinese women working in a distribution center on the urban fringe of Northwest China. Drawing on three months of ethnographic fieldwork as a temporary logistics worker—including

participant observation and interviews—I make three arguments. First, women in distribution centers perform intensive data labor that is both immaterial and physical. Their work includes communicative tasks such as coordinating with consumers, sellers, delivery workers, and platforms to clean and repair data, as well as embodied labor such as maintaining sorting machines and physically handling packages to ensure data capture. Second, this data labor is deeply platform-contingent and cross-platform in nature: workers rely on communicative platforms such as WeChat to sustain data flows while being monitored and managed through corporate platforms like DingTalk. Third, the exploitation of women's data labor both reflects and reinforces intersectional inequalities along gendered and rural–urban lines, rooted in China's longer histories of political and economic transformation.

By foregrounding the lived experiences of rural female logistics workers, this study contributes to critical data labor scholarship through an intersectional lens. It also challenges the assumption that data labor is purely immaterial or digital by revealing its embodied and physical dimensions. Finally, it disrupts distribution fetishism by making logistics data labor visible—thereby opening possibilities for regulation.

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MIP10 Vulnerability, Responsibility and Resilience in Cultural and Media Industries

PP 0977 Digital excess and the hidden ecological impacts of digitalisation: A user perspective

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Our digital lives are characterized by the continuous availability and accumulation of superabundant digital goods such as information and content. It has also been established that digitalization does not come without environmental costs: in addition to long-debated hardware-centric issues like short product lifecycles and insufficient e-waste management (Parikka 2015), there is a surge in energy and water consumption (Istrate et al. 2024; Pasek et al. 2023), which is expected to increase further due to the explosive growth of GenAI (Brevini 2021; Bashir et al. 2024).

In this research, we problematize the environmental burden of the digital world through the notion of digital excess, referring to aspects of our digital lives that are "subjectively perceived not to carry meaningful value but, rather, appear as wasteful and superfluous, while also causing harm to individuals, society, or the planet" (Olsson et al. 2023: 2). Digital excess is a complex phenomenon emerging from the interactions and tensions within the sociotechnical system of users, digital services, platforms, and the material infrastructures of computing that constitute our information society. It results not only from human behaviour and economic incentives but also from designable user interface and service mechanisms (Olsson 2026). Environmentally, digital excess insidiously increases the footprint of digital services through the invisible demand for computing resources (Crawford 2024), often for uses lacking clear utility.

In this presentation, we examine digital excess and its ecological impacts from a user-centred perspective. Using reflective diaries with media users (N = 30), we explore how digital excess is experienced, understood, structured, and managed by Finnish consumers. The pilot diary data (N = 6) revealed users' imaginaries of excess, reflected in cases of digital welter (an excessive plurality of different things), such as endless catalogues of on-demand entertainment, and digital surfeit (an excessive plenitude of one thing), such as gaming, as well as other experiences of plurality, irrelevancy, and redundancy. The main stage of diary data collection is ongoing. This data will be complemented by subsequent semi-structured interviews (N = 30) to investigate respondents' perceptions of the environmental impacts of excessive digital consumption. We also chart how media users hold companies accountable for their environmental responsibility and what kinds of mitigation strategies they envision. The interviews will be conducted in spring 2026.

This presentation aims to contribute to the problematization of digital excess as a relational phenomenon formed at the intersection of Big Tech and platform companies' logics of oversupply—implemented through UI and service design mechanisms and marketing strategies—and users' perceptions and behaviours. The research opens avenues for further exploration of sufficiency and value in digital consumption, as well as pathways toward a more sustainable digital consumer society.

MIP10 Vulnerability, Responsibility and Resilience in Cultural and Media Industries

PP 0978 Facing the SLAPP disruption in media industries: Management and multi-level support for resilient media

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Targeting media organizations and media professionals with strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) to silence their critical reporting poses a significant challenge for contemporary media industries (Bodnar & Gliszczyńska-Grabias, 2023; Prather, 2023). Research shows such lawsuits disrupt media professionals' routines (Kerševan & Poler, 2023), thereby constraining media production and, for smaller, independent outlets, often posing an existential threat.

During crisis or particularly difficult events, media professionals express a strong need for greater support from their superiors (Hughes, 2021). This aligns with the Organizational Support Theory (Eisenberger, 1986), which emphasizes fairness, leadership support, appropriate human resource practices, and working conditions as key factors shaping employees' perceptions of organizational care.

However, in situations of general stress, a person's well-being is influenced by a wider range of support sources (LaRocco et al., 1980), highlighting the importance of support from colleagues and peers (for example through journalistic or similar associations), as well as family and friends (Taylor, 2011).

The paper examines SLAPPs from a media management perspective, focusing on support measures within media organizations that enable sued media professionals to continue their work and manage the negative consequences of such lawsuits. We conducted twenty in-depth semi-structured interviews between June 2024 and March 2025 with media professionals targeted by SLAPP lawsuits. The interviewees were based in four European countries with the highest incidence of SLAPP suits per 100,000 inhabitants (CASE, 2022): Malta (4 interviews), Slovenia (5), Bosnia and Herzegovina (6), and Croatia (5).

The findings show that management-led support plays a decisive role in shaping media labor conditions, fostering resilience, and sustaining media production and work. Media professionals emphasized the importance of legal and financial protection, as well as operational, logistical, moral, and psychological support as key protective factors. Even in contexts of limited resources, symbolic gestures from superiors (such as statements of support, expressions of solidarity, and collective identification) helped reduce stress and reinforce professional confidence. By contrast, when support was absent, targeted media professionals reported self-censorship, additional stress, loss of professional motivation, and, in some cases, leaving their jobs.

Beyond organizational measures, targeted media professionals also turned to professional networks and civil-society organizations, as well as family and friends. Journalistic associations, other media professionals' organizations and NGOs often stepped in to validate their work and mobilize resources when media management lacked the capacity or willingness to do so, and were in cases of smaller, independent outlets often crucial for their survival.

The paper draws on these findings to critically assess media management responses to SLAPP lawsuits, treating organizational support as a decisive management choice. The paper further situates organizational practices within broader networks of professional, civil-society, and personal support, demonstrating that sustaining media production in times of crisis is a fundamentally relational process. In doing so, the paper contributes to debates on the future of media production and media industries by showing how management and multi-level support shape the conditions for resilient media, thereby mitigating chilling effects that are often one of the key aims of SLAPP lawsuits.

MIP11 Platformization, Inequality and Governance in Media Industries

PP 0957 Larger, faster, harder, younger: Structural churn and the deepening inequality of YouTube (2019–2025)

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This paper investigates the structural transformation of YouTube's creator ecosystem by comparing the global population of channels with at least 1,000 subscribers (the threshold for monetization) in 2019 and 2025. Based on two exhaustive platform-wide crawls, the study argues that the platform is increasingly defined by two simultaneous, yet contradictory, pressures: elite capture, where a dominant upper class monopolizes attention, and a newcomer surge, where (algorithmic) preference for "freshness" drives relentless turnover. Creators, even established ones, are thus challenged both from above by the channel elite and from below by constant, high-velocity competition.

Our data reveals a substantial expansion of the 1k+ subscriber tier, which grew from 4.4 million channels in 2019 to over 22 million in 2025. However, this five-fold increase has resulted in a form of saturation that disproportionately affects non-elite incumbents. While the platform's total views have climbed, the median views per video across the dataset have declined by 65%. Instead of a democratized "middle class," we observe a continuous consolidation of power: the top 1% of

channels increased their share of total platform views from 59.1% to 68.2%, while the top 10% now command nearly 92% of all attention.

Simultaneously, our data indicates a "newcomer surge" that destabilizes the non-elite majority. By analyzing channel cohorts, we find a strong divergence in performance based on channel age. Channels less than one year old exhibit a median "velocity" (a metric of growth) that significantly exceeds that of established channels, suggesting a pivot toward Shorts and viral turnover, driven by an interplay of algorithmic shifts, audience preferences, and new interface affordances. This creates a highly volatile environment: almost 60% of the channels active in 2019 are now inactive or no longer on the platform. Consequently, established creators face a paradox where tenure offers no protection against the "revolving door" of high-velocity entrants who temporarily cannibalize visibility before potentially falling victim to displacement themselves.

This squeeze on the established majority is further intensified by a significant geographic shift. The 2025 data confirms that the platform's center of gravity has moved to the Global South, with India overtaking the US in both channel volume and viewership, and rapid growth in markets like Indonesia and Pakistan. This indicates that the pressure on the incumbent creator is driven not only by algorithmic sorting but by an increasingly competitive global labor supply and mobile-first consumption habits.

By synthesizing these trends, the paper argues that YouTube has transitioned, at least in part, from a logic of "audience building," where time on the platform correlated with stability, to a regime of "algorithmic survival." The ecosystem is now characterized by a struggling majority, trapped between an unreachable elite and the accelerated obsolescence of the existing creator population. These findings offer critical insights for researchers of digital labor, platform governance, and the political economy of social media.

MIP11 Platformization, Inequality and Governance in Media Industries

PP 0958 Making a living in the metaverse? Exploring content creation, monetization, and governance in emerging virtual world platforms

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Although the initial hype surrounding the metaverse has waned in recent years, virtual world platforms —often described as "proto-metaverses"— such as Roblox, Minecraft, or Fortnite, continue to attract massive user bases (for instance, Roblox alone is estimated to have around 380 million monthly active users). These platforms rely heavily on user-generated content (UGC) and support creator ecosystems that generate tens of millions of dollars annually. While existing research has examined creator economies primarily on social media and video-sharing platforms, content creation in virtual worlds remains largely underexplored. To begin addressing this gap, this study provides an initial mapping of the boundary conditions shaping creator ecosystems in virtual world platforms, focusing on how platforms enable content creation, structure monetization opportunities, and govern relationships with creators.

The study draws on a qualitative analysis of 103 publicly available documents, including terms of use, policy guidelines, and creator-facing materials, from eleven virtual world platforms. The sample includes both centralized and decentralized, blockchain-based, platforms, enabling comparison across different approaches to governance.

Our findings show that virtual-world creator ecosystems reproduce many structural features of the broader creator economy, including pronounced power asymmetries between platforms and creators, winner-takes-all revenue distributions, and high levels of economic uncertainty for most participants. At the same time, virtual world platforms introduce distinctive socio-technical dynamics. Content creation is often asset-based and persistent, encompassing virtual environments, items, avatars, and plug-ins, which requires advanced technical skills and enables new forms of collaboration and specialization. Performance-based and event-driven content also plays an important role, frequently intersecting with external platforms such as YouTube or Twitch. Monetization pathways are similarly diverse, ranging from direct sales and subscriptions to platform-driven incentives, in-world advertising, and cross-platform revenue streams.

Platforms exercise strong control over creators' activities through rules embedded in terms of use, proprietary marketplaces, in-platform currencies, moderation practices, and opaque content visibility and recommendation mechanisms. While decentralized platforms emphasize narratives of ownership and participatory governance, these approaches remain partial, often trading greater formal autonomy for significantly smaller potential audiences. Across governance models, limited interoperability and strong reliance on proprietary content creation tools constrain creators' ability to diversify their economic activity, while reinforcing their structural dependence on platforms.

Overall, these findings illustrate how platforms do not merely host creative activity but actively configure the economic, technical, and institutional conditions under which creators operate. Our results contribute to situate virtual world content creation within current debates on platform political economy and the creator economy, providing critical insight into the promises, limits, and distributional consequences of creative labor in emerging immersive digital environments.

MIP11 Platformization, Inequality and Governance in Media Industries

PP 0959 Predatory communities on platforms

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This presentation introduces and substantiates the concept of predatory communities – communities engineered for value extraction – and we situate this concept within the overall platform economy. In contrast to conventional understandings of online communities as emergent social formations, we examine how individuals and organizations can exploit specific mechanisms to scaffold and facilitate community sentiments and commodification through predatory strategies. Grounded in a synthesis of sociological literature (Brint, 2001; Gusfield, 1975; Vaisey, 2007), internet studies (Baym, 2000), and platform scholarship (Cunningham & Craig, 2021; Poell et al., 2021; van Dijck et al., 2018), we define predatory communities and use three case studies involving social media influencers and finance-related platforms to illustrate the deployment of three predatory strategies: predatory inclusion (Besbris et al., 2022; Charron-Chénier, 2020), obscured identity and brokerage relationships (Goldstein & Eaton, 2021; Gregersen & Ørmen, 2024), and our own contribution, namely that of turning prey into predators. The presentation explores the inherent contradictions between the affective dimensions of community membership and the economic imperatives driving predatory practices, analyzing how individuals and organizations exploit platform infrastructures to construct and maintain predatory communities. As a contribution to critical political economy studies of platformized communication and culture, we argue for a renewed interrogation of the community concept, its related mechanisms, and the values and interests embedded within platformized communities.

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MIP11 Platformization, Inequality and Governance in Media Industries

PP 0960 Who owns the map? Spatial authority and fan cartography in the Witcher

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Maps are not neutral representations of space but powerful communicative devices that shape spatial imagination, mediate knowledge, and reproduce or contest authority (Harley, 1989; Crampton & Elden, 2008). In transmedia story worlds, mapping becomes particularly contested, as fictional geographies circulate across novels, games, screen adaptations, and online communities. This paper examines fan cartography in The Witcher universe as a spatially mediated practice through which authority, authenticity, and ownership are continuously negotiated.

Without an official map that establishes a "spatial truth" with the authority of the author, game developers, and screen adaptations have produced a proliferation of cartographic representations that seek to stabilise, visualise, and rationalise the fictional world. These maps do not merely illustrate narrative space; they function as what Abend and Harvey (2015) describe as geomedial action spaces, in which spatial coherence, narrative continuity, and legitimacy are actively debated. Drawing on Massey's (1999) concept of power geometries, we argue that these cartographic practices reveal uneven capacities to define space, with different actors holding unequal power to fix or contest spatial meanings. How do fan-created, game-based, and adaptation-driven maps circulate within the Witcher universe, influence one another, and function

as action spaces where spatial, temporal, and narrative consistency is negotiated, and how can these dynamics inform analyses of power relations and debates over authority, authorship, and ownership?

Methodologically, the study combines digital humanities approaches with qualitative content analysis. We trace the movements of key characters across the novels, video games, and Netflix adaptation, overlaying these trajectories with multiple fan-made and industry-produced maps. This spatial analysis is complemented by an examination of discussions in online fandom spaces, including fan wikis, Reddit, and Discord communities, where users debate distances, borders, landscape continuity, and the "correctness" of different cartographic interpretations. These discussions are thematically coded, with particular attention to arguments about spatial logic, canon, authorship, and ownership.

The analysis shows that fan maps operate as performative and discursive infrastructures rather than static representations. They mediate collective world-building, enable participatory sense-making, and foreground conflicts between proprietary transmedia production and crowd-sourced spatial knowledge. In doing so, Witcher cartographies become sites where broader questions about intellectual property, fan labour (Rodriguez-Amat & Sarikakis, 2012; Schiller, 2018), and spatial authority are articulated.

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MIP11 Platformization, Inequality and Governance in Media Industries

PP 0961 How Netflix is creating a common European culture. A research on video pjatformization in ten European countries

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"How Netflix is creating a common European culture", *The Economist* titled on March 31, 2021. In this respect, we will provide first-hand data on VOD movies and Tv-series, collected in the context of the Horizon 2020 project EUMEPLAT-European Media Platforms in Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye. Data have been collected in the three major VOD platforms in each country.

To what degree the use of common platforms – Netflix, Prime, HBO- is making the Europeans *more European*, in fact, is still to be understood. To start with, the offer of the VODs significantly varies from country to country: the Netflix catalogue contains more than 5,000 titles in Romania, around 4,400 in Belgium, and 3,800 in Spain.

We will put into focus the impact of geo-blocking strategies, and stratifications internal to the European media landscape. Even though geo-blocking is a widely reported phenomenon, VOD offer is impacted in a particular way. According to available estimates, cross-border availability of European contents accounts for 80% of the catalogues in the case of music download and 93% in the case of e-books, while VOD libraries overlap each other only by 30–50% of their titles. An indication of the role of geo-blocking can be inferred from the fact that, movies produced in EU are distributed in VOD platforms in 3.9 countries, compared to 5.4 countries for US movies, 4.9 for the rest of the world, and – more surprisingly – to 4.8 countries for non-EU European productions. In a similar vein, the VOD distribution of TV-shows produced in the EU covers on average 2.7 countries, compared to 6.9 countries for those coming from the US and from the rest of the world, and 3.4 for other European releases. The only encouraging aspect for the European common market is that the data reveals a slight improvement, with respect to the Tv-on-demand market. Still, movies and Tv-shows produced within the EU have *the poorest distribution* in Europe in VODs, with these data confirming Bourdon's and Sassoon's idea, that a properly European media culture does not exist, with audiences either attracted by national or American titles.

As the data about VOD movies and Tv-shows circulation reveals the importance of regional markets (i.e., German titles in Austria), we repeated these analyses on a bigger sample, by working on the full archive of the Lumière VOD database: more precisely, 90,510 movies, produced in 31 countries in the region. The data visualization will show a series of trends: the minor roles of the majority of countries; the scarcity of pan-European successes; and the role of the Big Five. The quota of imported non-national movies, on the total of European movies, drops down in the strongest production countries: 53.2% in France, 56.4% in the United Kingdom, 64.9% in Italy, 66.6% in Germany, and 77.9% in Spain. In all the other nations, the percentage ranges from 81.3 to 99.4%, in a way that basically confirms, in the VOD market, the very same proportions of the theatrical movie market.

MIP12 Visibility, Legitimacy and Discoverability in Platformized Media Industries

PP 1056 Economic and epistemic constraints on recommender system use in small media markets: A qualitative study in Belgium and Switzerland.

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The rapid adoption of AI by media organizations is creating new opportunities for content personalization for news and streaming services (e.g. Cools & Diakopoulos, 2024; Blassnig et al., 2025). By implementing algorithmic recommender systems and using AI for automated summaries, translations, and text-to-speech features, these organizations aim to offer users more opportunities to engage with their content. At the same time, the development of recommender systems comes with economic and epistemic challenges, some of which are specific to small media markets.

To analyze these challenges, this study draws on the epistemic welfare framework proposed by Hyzen et al. (2025), which conceptualizes the conditions under which individuals can exercise epistemic agency in increasingly algorithmically mediated environments. In this study, we use this framework to systematically compare how media organizations in German- and French-speaking Switzerland and Dutch- and French-speaking Belgium – four small media markets with distinct cultural and regulatory characteristics – are developing strategies and internal policies for AI-enabled content personalization for their news and/or streaming services. For the empirical part, the study is based on a qualitative document analysis of 136 company documents and on 28 expert interviews with upper- and middle-management professionals with editorial and technological backgrounds from the major media organizations in all four media markets, including commercial news publishers, public service media, and streaming services. Data collection began in November 2025 and will be completed in January 2026.

Data analysis is ongoing. Preliminary findings suggest that the rise of AI seems to have strengthened confidence in the potential of content personalization, particularly as media organizations see opportunities to reach new audiences, optimize user engagement, and diversify their content offerings. Moreover, interviews show that closer collaboration between editorial and technical staff enhances the implementation of recommender systems. However, this optimism is tempered by economic challenges that are especially pronounced in small markets, such as economies-of-scope constraints and an increased dependency on large technology platforms. Alongside these economic pressures, media organizations also face epistemic questions, including what constitutes a good balance between (semi-)automation and human curation, which criteria should guide algorithmic selections, how transparent the use of AI applications like recommender systems should be, and to what extent and how users should be able to control personalization algorithms.

The preliminary results suggest a sector in transition and in need of guiding principles, which we relate back to the epistemic welfare framework. Such value-based guiding framework is particularly relevant in small markets where economic constraints require difficult choices.

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MIP12 Visibility, Legitimacy and Discoverability in Platformized Media Industries

PP 1057 Hybrid regimes of legitimacy: Negotiating authority among cultural creators on social media

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This study investigates the profound transformation of cultural authority in the era of platformization, focusing on the emergence of cultural creators as a new category of "networked intellectuals". As social media infrastructures increasingly become primary environments for information and informal learning, traditional markers of expertise -linked to stable institutional affiliations and titles- are being challenged by a landscape where visibility is governed by opaque algorithms and affective metrics (Duffy et al. 2021; Poell et al. 2022; Bishop 2025).

In this context, I propose the concept of *hybrid legitimacy* to describe how these creators act as reflexive cultural mediators, constantly engaged in a work of translation between institutional standards, platform imperatives, and diverse audience demands.

The research is grounded in a qualitative study conducted between 2022 and 2024, involving 40 semi-structured interviews with Italian creators, including teachers, journalists and science communicators. Theoretically, the work integrates the Boltanski and Thévenot's *Economies of Worth* framework (1991) to map how creators justify their practices across conflicting orders of value: the *civic* (public utility), the *mercantile* (monetization), the *industrial* (efficiency), the *inspired* (creativity), the *domestic* (trust) and the *opinion* (attention).

The analysis reveals five specific regimes of legitimation through which cultural creators negotiate their status across audiencies, institutions, and platforms. First, *clarity* operates as an ethics of shared understanding where authority is built on explicability rather than technical distance. Second, *connection* which translates into a willingness to be corrected and to co-construct knowledge with one's followers. Third, *coherence* functions as a moral compass, where creators rigorously select commercial partners to protect their intellectual integrity. Fourth, *infrastructure* marks a strategy of resistance against algorithmic volatility, as creators invest in durable assets like books, private academies, or theatrical shows to gain autonomy. Finally, *institutional recognition* remains a desired but ambivalent goal, where creators seek validation from traditional gatekeepers through collaborations and co-design of cultural projects.

The findings highlight that legitimacy for these creators is a dynamic practice involving a continuous process of justifying their work across the conflicting demands of civic, mercantile, industrial, inspirational, domestic and fame-based orders of value: simplifying and making cultural content attractive and engaging, for example, responds for the creators to the criterion of *clarity* and helps them to sustain popularity according to the platforms logics (*opinion* and *mercantile* orders), but often invalidates and delegitimizes on the *civic* and *inspirational* order. At the same time, building one's own assets outside of platforms, or accepting collaborations with cultural institutions for free, often requires a cost in terms of monetization (*mercantile* order), but helps to produce greater intellectual autonomy with respect to the platforms logics and therefore improves creators legitimacy based on *inspiration* and *civic* value.

In particular, the interviews reveal that these creators are subjected to a new mediation work: while the dynamics of *clarity, connection*, and *coherence* align with established influencer strategies (Hund 2023; Abidin 2021), the pursuit of *institutional recognition* and the creation of independent cultural *infrastructures* necessitate that cultural creators navigate-and often challenge- prevailing platform logics and their underlying economic and value systems.

MIP12 Visibility, Legitimacy and Discoverability in Platformized Media Industries

PP 1058 Modes of attention and the lifeworld of music streaming

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In recent years, attention has become a key concern in music and media industry research, particularly in studies of digital platforms, streaming services, and algorithmic media environments. Across this literature, concepts such as the attention economy (Goldhaber, 1997) are frequently used to describe how platforms organise visibility, engagement, and the circulation of cultural content, by treating human attention as a valuable resource under conditions of informational abundance. While these perspectives have been central to analyses of platform power and the economic organization of contemporary media use, this article seeks to further develop how attention itself is conceptualized and analyzed in relation to platform-mediated practices – in specific those involving music and sound.

Theoretically, the article moves beyond approaches that treat attention primarily as cognitive focus or measurable engagement, and instead conceptualises attention as something that unfolds across multiple dimensions of everyday experience. Taking music and audio streaming as an analytical entry point, we adopt a phenomenological-sociological perspective to examine how attention is lived and organised in everyday encounters with platform media.

Building on Schutz's (1967) work on attentional modifications – foregrounding how consciousness shifts between different modes of relevance – and on van Manen's (1997) framework of lifeworld existentials, we introduce an expanded conceptualisation of attention in terms of four interrelated modes: the bodily, the temporal, the spatial, and the relational. Applying this framework to music streaming, we examine how platforms engage and organise modes of attention through features such as mood- and activity-based playlists, personalised recommendations, and continuous playback. This framework allows us to ask:

How do everyday users experience and navigate attention in their encounters with music and audio streaming?

Empirically, the article draws on qualitative interviews with twenty everyday users of music and audio streaming services. Our preliminary findings suggest that competition for users' sustained or fully focused attention captures only part of how streaming platforms engage users, as platforms also address bodily states such as relaxation or concentration, align listening with temporal patterns such as routines and transitions, situate music within specific spatial contexts such as commuting or working, and configure relational modes of attention involving both social connection and solitary engagement.

Taken together, the article proposes that the attention economy can be understood not only as a system oriented toward capturing discrete moments of focused attention, but as a sociotechnical arrangement that engages, organizes, and derives value from multiple modes of lived experience across everyday life. While this may point to an increasingly intensive platform

economy driven by the expansion of attention-based value extraction across an ever-wider range of activities, situations, and experiential domains, it also highlights the role of music and audio media as central elements of the lifeworld – through which everyday activities, moods, and situations are oriented, sustained, and rendered meaningful.

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MIP12 Visibility, Legitimacy and Discoverability in Platformized Media Industries

PP 1059 Strategies for the visibility and discoverability of audiovisual works: The case of European animation

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Online platforms have created new opportunities for producers and rights holders, enabling them to distribute content directly to consumers, and reshaping the latters' habits. This shift represented a structural transformation across the production, distribution, broadcasting, and consumption of audiovisual content (Nieborg and Poell, 2018; Song, 2024). Market concentration has simultaneously intensified. Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+ accounted for 85% of total viewing time on subscription video-on-demand (SVoD) services between September 2022 and September 2023 (Grece and Trans, 2023). Besides, while platform catalogues are extensive, audiences frequently encounter choice overload (Ranaivoson et al., 2024), which raises search costs for non-mainstream and niche content and reinforces demand for a limited number of highly popular titles.

In response to these limitations, academic and policy attention has increasingly shifted towards the concept of discoverability. It refers to the likelihood for a content to be engaged with by audiences. A growing body of scholarship has addressed discoverability, a concept that has migrated from information science and web design into film and television studies (McKelvey and Hunt, 2019; Salganik et al., 2024.

What are the obstacles and enablers for the discoverability of audiovisual works on online platforms?

The work is applied to the European animation industry. While animation remains dominated by the US audiovisual industry, European animation has demonstrated strong international circulation, internally and externally, compared to all other genres (Creative Europe Media et al. (2017). The analysis is based on a series of workshops with 60+ professionals of the European animation industry. A key topic was how, and where, audiences (particularly youth) find, access, and engage with European animation.

An expected finding is the taking into account of discoverability as the result of a temporal and strategic process shaped by platform governance, industry practices, and audience behaviour. This study argues that the central challenge facing European animation is **temporal discoverability**: the capacity of animated works to remain visible, to be re-encountered, and to generate meaningful engagement over time within algorithmically curated catalogues.

MIP13 Media Industries, Public Value and Cultural Expression in Transition

PP 1154 Narration in streaming fiction series: A quantitative content analysis of plot, style, and characters in Netflix Originals (2013–2024)

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Keywords

streaming, fiction series, quantitative content analysis, narration, platformization

Digital streaming platforms shape the production and consumption of cultural content in modern society. Big tech companies such as Netflix are poised to gain from this transformation, as binge-watching has become the dominant type of consumption. These shifting grounds are caused predominantly by *platformization,* which refers to how logics of datafication and commodification affect 'the production, distribution, and circulation of cultural content' (Nieborg & Poell, 2018, p. 4275). Studies on production and consumption are arguably key to television and streaming research in the platform era; nevertheless, research on streaming *content*and its constitutive feature, *narration* (or storytelling), has been underdeveloped apart from a few recent exceptions (Heiselberg et al., 2026; Lotz & Lobato, 2023).

This paper examines longitudinal changes and continuities in the narration of the most popular original fiction series on Netflix (the world's leading streaming service) from beginning to present (2013–2024). It performs a quantitative content analysis of over 150 episodes selected through a stratified sampling strategy (Riffe et al., 2023). The focus is threefold: plot, style, and character. Taken together, these three dimensions are constitutive of narration, just like narrative is constitutive of a fiction series. Drawing on narratology, manuscript literature, and recent theory on serial narration (for instance Altman, 2008; Bordwell, 1985; Christensen, 2023; Field, 2005; Heiselberg et al., 2026), this article presents a quantitative

framework for analysing narration in fictional and serial platform content. The subject is relevant and timely given the growing production and consumption of such content in the platform age.

Being a work in progress, the paper will first perform statistical analyses of the constitutive variables of the three narrational dimensions. Secondly, it will compare the findings to popular hypotheses circulating in the academic and critical debate:Have Netflix's streaming fiction series become more complex and intensive? Or is it rather the opposite: simpler and extensive? Finally, it will discuss the usefulness of the framework for future studies on related, yet different, types of platforms, for instance, Broadcast Video-on-Demand services.

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MIP13 Media Industries, Public Value and Cultural Expression in Transition

PP 1155 Spanish audiovisual production driven by US streamers: Titles, formats and trends

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The international expansion of US-based video-on-demand services since the mid-2010s has significantly reshaped production dynamics, market structures and power relations within European audiovisual industries (Johnson, 2017; Iordache et al., 2024). A defining feature of this transformation has been the strategic centrality of 'original' productions, understood as exclusive works commissioned, co-produced or branded by streamers in order to localise their services, differentiate their catalogues and strengthen subscriber acquisition and retention (Lotz, 2018; Iordache, 2022). In Spain, US-based streamers have moved beyond distribution to become key drivers of local original production, operating within a regulatory environment that mandates investment in European works. This paper analyses the scope and characteristics of Spanish audiovisual works driven by US streamers, engaging with broader debates on so-called 'originals', cultural influence and the control of intellectual property (Davis, 2021; Lotz et al., 2022; Lotz & Lobato, 2023).

The study focuses on six services operating in Spain: Netflix, Prime Video, Max, Disney+, Apple TV+ and SkyShowtime. It addresses two research questions: how many Spanish audiovisual works have been driven by US streamers since their arrival in the Spanish market, and what are the main characteristics of these works in terms of formats, production volume, industrial partnerships and release patterns. Methodologically, the research is based on a database comprising 407 Spanish titles released between 2015 and 2025. Data collection combined the analysis of corporate press releases, specialised trade media, institutional and industry reports, and audiovisual databases, complemented by a systematic review of production credits and service interfaces.

The findings reveal a sustained and growing involvement of US streamers in the commissioning of Spanish originals, particularly from 2018 onwards. Netflix and Prime Video account for over 85% of the titles and hours produced, confirming their dominant role in shaping the Spanish production ecosystem. In line with Iordache's (2022) analysis of differentiated localisation strategies across European markets, the Spanish case shows how streamers combine large-scale investment with selective partnerships involving a relatively small group of Madrid- and Barcelona-based companies. Serialized fiction constitutes the core of streamer-driven original production, as previously identified in studies on Netflix originals in Spain (Albornoz & García Leiva, 2022), while the growing presence of feature films, documentaries and partially scripted formats—such as reality and talent shows—points to an expansion of production strategies oriented towards audience engagement and service differentiation (Fernández-Herruzo & Pedrero-Esteban, 2023; Lang, 2023).

While the expansion of original production by US streamers has enhanced the international circulation, visibility and perceived quality of Spanish audiovisual works (Álvarez Monzoncillo, 2024; Parrot Analytics et al., 2024), the paper critically discusses its structural implications. In particular, it highlights how commissioning practices and buyout-based contractual models enable US streamers to retain ownership of intellectual property, reinforcing asymmetries in bargaining power and raising concerns about the long-term sustainability and cultural autonomy of independent production in Spain (García Leiva, 2023). The paper concludes by situating the Spanish case within wider European debates on regulation, market concentration and the future of local original production in the streaming era.

MIP13 Media Industries, Public Value and Cultural Expression in Transition

PP 1156 The ins and outs of cross-industry journalistic collaboration among small local newspapers

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Small local newspapers face multiple constraints in producing investigative and innovative journalism. Limited resources and expertise make it difficult to deliver in-depth reporting on complex issues. At the same time, expectations to produce content that audiences will engage with have intensified in an attention economy where advertising revenue increasingly flows to global technology platforms and subscription income has become a central component of local newspapers' business models. Against this backdrop, collaborative projects are emerging as an industry strategy to address the resource challenges confronting news media organizations (Jenkins & Graves, 2024). While previous research has primarily examined global collaborative initiatives in fact-checking (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2023) and investigative reporting (Konow-Lund & Olsson, 2021), collaboration at the local level remains comparatively underexplored within media industry research (Lincoln et al., 2025).

This study addresses this gap by examining inter-organizational collaboration in a Norwegian initiative - *the collaborative desk* – established by the Local Association of Local Newspapers (LLA), the public broadcaster NRK, and the Centre for Investigative Journalism (SUJO). The desk, partly funded through state support, produces data packages for more than 110 local newspapers across Norway, providing statistics and editorial resources that serve as raw material for locally produced news stories. Drawing on the theoretical lenses of institutional logics (Thornton et al., 2012) and epistemic authority and epistemic contests in news work (Ekström, 2002; Carlson, 2017; Carlson, 2025), the study analyzes the organizational and epistemic dynamics shaping collaboration between local newsrooms and a centrally positioned editorial desk. Specifically, we ask how organizational arrangements, resources, and institutional pressures influence collaborative workflows, and how authority, expertise, and professional credibility are distributed and contested across local and central newsrooms.

The study draws on qualitative interviews with news workers at the collaborative desk, representatives of LLA, NRK, and SUJO, and journalists and editors from participating local newspapers (N = 20). Findings reveal persistent tensions between the desk's project logic- focused on producing standardized data as editorial "raw material" – and the production logic of local newspapers, which must operate under severe time and staffing constraints. These constraints often limit local outlets' ability to fully realize the journalistic potential of the data packages. Moreover, the epistemic demands of producing news that is perceived as legitimate, accurate, and socially meaningful in local contexts generate friction between centralized data expertise and locally grounded journalistic knowledge. Nevertheless, informants express strong support for networked collaboration and identify several pathways for improving coordination and mutual understanding between the central desk and local newsrooms.

By foregrounding organizational logics and epistemic authority, this study contributes to media industry research by demonstrating how collaborative journalism operates as both an organizational strategy and a site of epistemic negotiation. It advances understanding of the conditions under which inter-organizational collaboration may strengthen or constrain local journalism and offers insights relevant to both scholars and practitioners concerned with the sustainability and quality of local news.

MIP13 Media Industries, Public Value and Cultural Expression in Transition

PP 1157 The public value created by public service media for and with the music industries in Estonia and Finland

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The platformization and datafication of media service markets have raised challenges for the sustainability and diversity of local cultural industries, including music industries. At the same time, media scholars and practitioners are renegotiating the role of public service media (PSM) organizations in the digital age and the kinds of value they are expected to generate for their host societies, including their creative sectors (e.g. Túñez-López et al., 2021).

Bridging these two fields of inquiry, this paper asks: What kind of (public) value do Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) and Finnish Yleisradio (Yle) create for and with the local music industries? The two countries differ markedly in scale and level of institutional development, with Estonia representing a small and emerging music industry and Finland a larger and more established one.

The question is addressed through an exploratory research design that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, the study investigates the presence – or absence – of music-specific programming principles, policies, and collaborative strategies at ERR and Yle through document analysis and interviews with PSM staff. Second, it examines the experiences and expectations of Estonian and Finnish music industry professionals regarding PSM through an online survey and around 40 semi-structured expert interviews.

The analysis maps how music-specific programming across channels, and collaborations between PSM and music professionals, generate different types of industry, cultural and societal value. Theoretically, the project synthesizes and advances the concepts of 'public value' (e.g. Mazzucato & Ryan-Collins, 2022) and 'national innovation systems' (e.g. Lundvall, 2010), drawing more broadly on innovation and institutional economics, systems and value theories, and public administration scholarship.

This paper forms part of a postdoctoral research project conducted in collaboration between Tallinn University and University of Turku, running until the end of 2027. The project's conceptual aim is to enhance understanding of how public and private institutions in the creative sectors interact. Specifically, for example, the project contributes empirically grounded insights to PSM scholarship on *market failure*, on the one hand, and *crowding out*, on the other (e.g. Donders et al., 2020), while foregrounding the social and cultural complexities of market shaping in national media economies. Ultimately, the findings aim to inform the development of more effective media and music policies in Estonia and Finland.

At the conference, the completed analysis of the Estonian case study will be presented, alongside preliminary comparative insights between the two countries.

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MIP13 Media Industries, Public Value and Cultural Expression in Transition

PP 1158 The spiral of silence produced by the culture industry: Political expression and self-censorship among independent musicians in Turkey

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This study aims to examine how the culture industry produces a spiral of silence in Turkey by analyzing the experiences of non-mainstream/independent musicians, drawing on Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of the culture industry alongside Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory. Adorno and Horkheimer's cultural industry criticizes the transformation of cultural production into an ideological apparatus that standardizes itself within the logic of the capitalist market and produces obedience under the guise of entertainment; Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory, on the other hand, refers to individuals refraining from expressing their opinions in the public sphere for fear of being excluded by the majority.

In Turkey, the rapid increase in concert and festival cancellations in recent years, cultural event bans sometimes imposed through direct pressure from sects and communities, and the continuation of music bans during the pandemic even after the health justification disappeared, combined with digital platform algorithms and lynching/targeting practices, are spreading authoritarian cultural policies. This hegemonic environment demonstrates that the culture industry functions not only as an aesthetic production but also as a sphere of power that determines who can say what, how much, and how. However, critical cultural studies at the intersection of the culture industry and the spiral of silence are limited in the Turkish context. This study aims to fill this gap.

Within this scope, the study seeks answers to the following questions: (1) How do the structural and symbolic pressures produced by the culture industry create a spiral of silence for non-mainstream musicians in Turkey? (2) In which political and cultural themes does this spiral of silence turn into self-censorship? (3) How does this process differ for female and male musicians? Current discussions reveal that female musicians are targeted by moralistic discourse not only because of their politically charged lyrics, but also because of their bodies on stage, their clothing, their performances, and their feminist/body politics-related discourse; while male musicians face more economic and sectoral sanctions, such as concert/festival cancellations, blacklisting, and loss of livelihood.

The research field consists of 6 female and 6 male independent musicians who are not affiliated with major record labels and reach their audience through bars/small venues, alternative festivals, and digital platforms. Participants will be selected through purposeful and snowball sampling; data obtained from semi-structured focus group interviews conducted separately with female and male musicians will be analyzed through thematic analysis and critical theoretical reading. The study aims to offer a unique contribution to the cultural industry literature by discussing the current regime of pressure in the music field in Turkey from a critical cultural studies perspective, incorporating the dimensions of the spiral of silence and, to a lesser extent, gender/body politics.

Keywords
Culture industry, spiral of silence, Turkey

MED01 Transformations of Mediatization in the Age of AI and Digital Infrastructures

PP 0011 Platformisation, datafication, automation… as well as other "ations". How do mediatisation researchers perceive successive transformative phenomena

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Contemporary research on mediatisation is undergoing a transformation. This concerns the subject of research, including redefinition of contemporary transformative processes, the methods used, as well as the structure of the research field. This prompts us to take a closer look at the condition and identity of the field of mediatisation research, while at the same time checking whether it complies with the principles of epistemology and the sociology of knowledge formulated years ago by such luminaries of knowledge theory as Fleck, Khun, Bourdieu and Knorr Cetina. What is a collective self-knowledge and collective self-understanding of the emerging new phenomena and the research field by its' creators themselves?

The aim of the presented research was to determine how researchers in the field of mediatisation perceive contemporary transformative phenomena such as platformisation, algorithmisation, datafication, automation, artificialisation, etc., and how they position them. The question was posted as to what extent they are facets of mediatisation and to what extent they constitute separate fields, and what significance this has for the identity of the field of mediatisation research. The opinions of the respondents on the relationship between new trends and the directions of transformation in the field were analysed. The perspectives of different generations of researchers (*founding fathers*, *continuators*, *innovators*) and their locations (Global North and Global South) were distinguished. The importance of science system and policy, institutionalisation and individual careers were emphasised for the direction of the research field. The latest developments were also confronted with the visions of the future of the field verbalised by researchers.

The study used individual, semi-structured in-depth interviews with mediatisation researchers. The data was collected in the first half of 2025. Fifty-six researchers from seventeen countries, including the northern and southern hemispheres, took part in the study. Fifty-three interviews were oral and three were written. First, researchers with the highest citation rates for their work on mediatisation were invited to participate in the study; then, individuals identified in interviews as key to the development of the field; and finally, individuals recommended by interviewees as potentially valuable informants.

The conclusions from the research point to the role of paradigmatic discussions, being *semi-paradigmatic game* within the field. Heterogeneous perception by the researchers of the role of new developments for the condition and identity of research on mediatization was identified. Specific mechanisms operating in the thought collective and thought style of mediatisation research, such as *combating anomalies through inclusion*, *the pursuit of novelty*, or *rushing ahead* were distinguished. The research also showed that institutional and financial elements of the science system are crucial for epistemic culture, including *career-driven practices* and *grant-oriented research environment*, as they determine the strategic and current decisions of the field's participants who decide on the future of the field.

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MED01 Transformations of Mediatization in the Age of AI and Digital Infrastructures

PP 0012 Generative mediatization: How AI reconfigures discourse, authority, and public meaning

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Generative AI (GenAI) does not merely automate language; it reconfigures the conditions under which discourse, authority, and legitimacy emerge. Large language models increasingly co-author texts and simulate dialogue, reshaping not only communicative content but the infrastructural conditions of meaning-making. Mediatization theory provides a critical lens for understanding this transformation, given its long-standing focus on how media technologies—and, in deep mediatization, algorithmic infrastructures—reorganize communicative practices and institutional logics (Hepp, 2020; Couldry & Hepp, 2013). Yet the widespread adoption of algorithmic media and GenAI marks a deeper ontological shift: media no longer primarily mediate communication but actively generate meaning and even "new worlds" through algorithmic composition embedded in platform infrastructures (Feher, Gackowski & Zaman, under review).

Building on recent work conceptualizing this shift as generative mediatization (Feher, 2025), this present study argues that GenAI systems operate as automated discursive infrastructures (Monteiro-Krebs et al., 2024): material, computational, and institutional assemblages that shape what can be said, by whom, and with what perceived authority. Governed by probabilistic computation, platform logics, and corporate alignment regimes, these infrastructures remain largely opaque to

users (Bucher, 2018). At the same time, the computational foundations of synthetic text production reveal hidden material costs—from mining and energy consumption to digital waste—linking discursive power to ecological and infrastructural burdens (Haenens et al., 2024).

By filtering, remixing, and fabricating text, GenAI dissolves stable authorship, genre, and context, producing synthetic intertextuality without clear provenance or accountability (Noble, 2018; Benjamin, 2019). Drawing on platform studies and algorithmic governance, the present study shows how discursive power operates infrastructurally. Extending Gillespie's (2014) account of algorithms as socially constructed systems of relevance, GenAI creates fluent, institution-like discourse without epistemic grounding, producing simulative authority—an appearance of expertise generated through statistical patterning rather than accountable knowledge production, as conceptualized by the authors for Critical Discourse Studies (Feher et al., forthcoming, based on Bender et al., 2021 and Gillings et al., 2024). This authority is co-produced through the interplay of "warm" human practices and "cold" computational procedures (Hoes et al., 2024), reinforced by interface design and alignment mechanisms.

These dynamics fundamentally challenge established understandings of mediatization. At the intersection of mediatization and AI, public communication is increasingly co-produced by automated, stochastic infrastructures that lack social biography yet exercise classificatory, normative, and agenda-setting power (Gillespie, 2020; Włoch, 2025; Feher, 2025). This shift foregrounds discursive infrastructures as constitutive sites of mediatized power rather than neutral technical intermediaries, reinforcing the ECREA Mediatization Section's renewed focus on technologically driven societal transformation.

Taken together, these developments require a conceptual differentiation within mediatization theory. Mediatization captures how media technologies reorganize communicative practices and institutional logics; deep mediatization explains how algorithmic media infrastructures intensify and coordinate these processes across social domains. Generative AI, however, signals a further shift toward generative mediatization (Feher 2025), in which media systems no longer merely mediate or algorithmically structure communication but actively produce discourse, authority, and public meaning through automated, platform-based infrastructures.

MED01 Transformations of Mediatization in the Age of AI and Digital Infrastructures

PP 0013 Artificial Intelligence as a science communication challenge: On the need for and challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration across academia

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a highly visible and contested topic in contemporary public discourse. Current discussion around Generative AI (GenAI) and Large Language Models (LLMs) clearly illustrate the topic's relevance on public agendas worldwide. Media attention, political debate, and commercial interests have fuelled intense public discussion, often characterised by polarisation, hype, and competing claims about AI's capabilities, risks, and societal implications. While existing research has examined how AI is communicated in news media, governance, marketing, and social media, less attention has been paid to how public AI discourse relates to fragmentation and disagreement within academia and science themselves.

This study conceptualises AI as a science communication challenge and argues that current public debates around GenAI and LLMs cannot be fully understood without examining tensions within academic-scientific discourse. Empirically, it adopts a two-part research design that combines analyses of public-facing and academic-scientific communication. The first part draws on a qualitative analysis of social media discourse among academics and scientists to highlight frictions, disagreements, and competing knowledge claims in public GenAI debates. This analysis shows how disciplinary positions, normative commitments, and institutional affiliations shape public interventions by researchers, often reinforcing polarised framings rather than facilitating cross-disciplinary dialogue. Influential voices—particularly those operating at the intersection of academia and the technology industry—play a central role in structuring these debates.

The second part contextualises these public-facing dynamics through a large-scale computational analysis of academic publishing on LLMs. Drawing on 36,900 article abstracts retrieved from Web of Science, the study examines which disciplines are most actively publishing on LLM-related topics, the extent to which interdisciplinary exchange is occurring, and how different fields define key research questions and priorities. Methods include topic modelling, keyword analysis, and citation network analysis, enabling a comparative view of disciplinary emphases and patterns of intellectual exchange across the academic landscape.

By integrating insights from both parts, the study demonstrates how epistemic fragmentation within science contributes to confusion, contestation, and competing imaginaries in the public sphere. Differences in ontological assumptions, temporal orientations to risk, and evaluative criteria across disciplines help explain why debates about AI's present and future remain difficult to reconcile. The study concludes by reflecting on the implications of these findings for science communication and interdisciplinary collaboration, arguing that greater epistemic humility and sustained cross-disciplinary engagement are essential for fostering more coherent, balanced, and publicly meaningful discussions about emerging AI technologies.

MED01 Transformations of Mediatization in the Age of AI and Digital Infrastructures

PP 0014 Artificial intelligence and society: Comparative studies on attitudes, Opportunities, risks, and user practices in Germany and Poland

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The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) into everyday life has fundamentally altered communication practices, decision-making processes, and public discourse across societies. Since the release of large generative AI models such as ChatGPT in late 2022, AI technologies have become widely accessible and increasingly influential in domains ranging from media production and education to healthcare, finance, and political communication. While these developments offer considerable potential, they also generate profound societal concerns related to trust, transparency, bias, surveillance, and the legitimacy of automated decision-making. Understanding how AI is perceived, interpreted, and used in different European countries can be regarded as a key l challenge for contemporary social and communication research.

This paper presents a comparative, mixed-methods study investigating societal attitudes toward AI, perceived opportunities and risks, and emerging user practices in Germany and Poland. Empirically, the project combines three interrelated studies designed to capture AI perceptions at the levels of public discourse, stakeholder interpretation, and individual experience.

(1) Media Analysis: The first study adopts a comparative qualitative media analysis of AI-related coverage in major German and Polish online news outlets published between November 2022 and January 2025. The analysis takes the form of a discursive and narrative overview of media representations of artificial intelligence, anchored in key technological and regulatory moments (such as the release of GPT-4 and the adoption of the European AI Act). The study examines how AI is discursively constructed through recurrent interpretive frames, dominant narrative logics, evaluative repertoires, and thematic associations with risk, benefit, governance, ethics, and societal transformation. Attention is paid to patterns of meaning-making across texts, including implicit assumptions, metaphors, and argumentative structures that organize journalistic accounts. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how public meanings of AI are produced, stabilized, and contested within national media discourses.
(2) The second study employs semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and experts from policymaking, industry, and civil society in both countries (n = 12). These interviews examine how actors involved in AI development, regulation, and advocacy interpret media narratives, assess societal readiness for AI, and negotiate tensions between innovation, regulation, and public trust. The qualitative data also serve a heuristic function by informing the design and interpretation of the population survey.
(3) The third study consists of a standardized online questionnaire conducted in Germany and Poland. Drawing on established measurement instruments, the survey captures multiple dimensions of AI acceptance, including trust, perceived usefulness, perceived risks, autonomy concerns, and willingness to use AI in specific application contexts (e.g., automated decision-making, generative AI, facial recognition). The survey enables comparative analyses across national contexts and socio-demographic variables, as well as alignment with existing European datasets.

By integrating findings from media content analysis, expert interviews, and population surveys, the project offers a data-driven, comparative account of how AI is socially constructed, evaluated, and practiced in Germany and Poland. The results contribute empirically to research on AI acceptance and trust in Europe, demonstrate the importance of context-specific application domains, and provide evidence relevant to ongoing debates on AI governance and regulation in Europe.

MED02 Artificial Intelligence and Professional CommunicationPractices

PP 0117 From declaration to reaction: How artificial intelligence transforms journalistic work – Findings from a biometric experiment

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Artificial intelligence (AI)'s growing presence in media production fundamentally reshapes journalism, from automating content creation to reorganizing newsroom workflows. These changes raise important questions about journalistic identity and professional autonomy, as well as about how journalists cognitively and emotionally respond to AI-supported work environments. Although interviews, surveys, and self-reports remain common in research on this topic, they often fail to capture unconscious or involuntary reactions to technological change (Karl, 2021).

This presentation reports findings from an empirical study combining traditional qualitative and quantitative methods with biometric analysis, offering a multidimensional perspective on how AI affects journalistic practice. The study was conducted among journalists in Poland, including both users and non-users of AI tools such as ChatGPT. By collecting physiological data - such as indicators of emotional arousal and cognitive load - the study captures psychological effects that remain inaccessible through self-reported measures alone.

The analysis addresses three main research questions:

(1) What differences emerge in the writing process between journalists who use ChatGPT and those who do not?
(2) How does AI influence task completion time and emotional engagement?
(3) Does chatbot use affect journalists' self-evaluation of efficiency and content quality?

Several hypotheses were formulated. It was assumed that participants using ChatGPT would complete writing tasks more quickly and exhibit lower levels of emotional arousal. At the same time, they were expected to report lower satisfaction with the quality of their written output compared to those working without AI assistance. These assumptions were based on previous research on automation and human-AI collaboration, which suggests that increased efficiency does not always correspond with positive evaluations of work outcomes. The hypotheses aimed to capture both the benefits and the potential limitations of AI-supported journalistic work. Testing these assumptions is important for understanding how journalists actually use AI tools in their everyday professional practice. Such knowledge is crucial for evaluating the impact of AI on journalistic quality and the future working conditions in newsrooms.

Triangulating biometric data with interviews and survey responses increased the credibility of the findings and reduced interpretative bias (Denzin, 2012; Fusch et al., 2018). Overall, the study demonstrates how biometric tools can enrich research on the human dimensions of technological transformation in journalism and media practice, contributing to a deeper understanding of journalists' embodied responses to AI-supported work environments.

MED02 Artificial Intelligence and Professional CommunicationPractices

PP 0118 From gatekeepers to interpreters: How AI reshapes information mediation practices and professional competencies

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The growing reliance on AI-mediated information systems threatens a crucial societal function: the provision of reliable, contextualised information by impartial experts, such as archivists and news analysts, who are trained in methodological rigor, bound by professional ethics, and accountable for their interpretations. We conceptualise their work as iterative hermeneutic information mediation: a recursive, expert-driven practice in which hypotheses are continuously formed, tested, and revised through contextualisation, repositioning, and engagement with data records and stakeholders. In archival studies, this mode of work aligns with the records continuum model — create, capture, organise, pluralise (Colavizza et al., 2021). Media analysts often use AI or data-driven methods and tools to make sense of the public discourse emerging around news and ongoing affairs, including crisis communication (Meißner & Diers-Lawson, 2022; de Winkel et al., 2026, forthcoming).

The introduction of AI into this workflow of information experts reconfigures the practice by relocating key moments of judgement downstream of algorithmic processing. Drawing on the notion of human-AI team design patterns (Van Zoelen et al., 2023), we observe that AI systems occupy an intermediary position between expert and stakeholder (e.g. citizen or government official), implicitly substituting direct interaction. This reconfiguration often spurs from implicit assumptions that AI mediation improves efficiency, rather than explicit workflow (re)design choices. In practice, however, this shift fundamentally alters the work of information professionals. Such interdependent sociotechnical changes raise pressing questions for professional training and workflow (re)design (Hernandez et al., 2024). Human experts require new digital, epistemic, and evaluative competencies, while simultaneously AI systems need to be designed as to foster meaningful human-AI collaboration — through explainability, traceability, and support for iterative (re)interpretation. Such a reconfiguration should thus be considered as a process of 'mediatization' (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 105) both forcing professional information work to adapt to AI driven media, as well as integrating itself in the workflow of the information expert.

This paper researches the evolving configurations of human-AI collaboration for information mediation. We discuss two use cases of changing epistemic authority from human information professionals, to interpreters of AI-driven systems: the Oorlog voor de Rechter project, in which the use of AI reconfigures the workflow and evaluation of digitised archival material, and the Bird's Eye Perspective (BEP) project, which supports communication professionals in analysing social media discourse using discursive psychology frameworks. Through interviews with information professionals and an analysis of learning goals, didactic approaches, and values, we examine changes in professional roles, expertise, accountability, and required competencies, as well as the functional requirements of AI systems, including explainability, trust, and support for iterative sensemaking. Our findings are used to inform the development of a robust sociotechnical design framework that integrates professional (re)training with AI-mediated workflow and human-AI interaction requirements, ensuring that expert judgement is strengthened rather than eroded. This research aims to guide and empower information professionals to navigate and shape the evolving information ecosystem, without losing their core contributions in the process.

MED02 Artificial Intelligence and Professional CommunicationPractices

PP 0119 AI usage, perceptions, and literacy across scientists, communicators, intermediaries, and citizens: Mapping the Swiss science communication landscape

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Rationale

Artificial intelligence (AI) is said to fundamentally reshape science communication (AUTHOR, 2023), representing a new phase of deep mediatization caused by communicative AI. Yet, empirical evidence to support such claims is scarce, and comprehensive mappings across science communication actors involved is lacking (AUTHOR, 2025). Building on theories of sociotechnological adoption and change (e.g. Venkatesh et al., 2003), AI literacy (Ng et al., 2021), and mediatization approaches (AUTHOR, 2014), this study provides a comprehensive mapping of AI-related dimensions across the Swiss science communication ecosystem. Drawing on a comprehensive, large-scale, national study that surveys (1) professional science communicators, (2) scientists, (3) Wikipedians, (4) science content creators, (5) science journalists, and (6) citizens, we ask:

RQ: How do these groups converge and diverge in their use of, perceptions of, and literacy regarding AI in science communication?

Data

Data collection takes place from November 2025 to March 2026. Respondents are recruited through collaborations with institutions, professional associations, and communities of practice; curated mailing lists; snowball sampling on social media platforms; and third-party polling companies. Surveys are administered in German, French, Italian, and partly in English. The study is being preregistered, and the authors have not yet accessed the responses.

The citizen survey includes 2,000 respondents. All other groups are expected to have approximately 250 responses each, except for science journalists and content creators, resulting in an estimated total sample of at least 3,000.

Measures

All surveys share a common structure and assess the same constructs, with wordings adapted to each group. The following dimensions are included: *AI attitudes* are measured using established multi-item scales adapted from prior research (e.g., Greussing et al., 2025; Sohn & Kwon, 2020; Gillespie et al., 2023). *AI literacy* is assessed through a combination of subjective assessments and objective knowledge-based items drawing on validated instruments (e.g., Wissenschaftsbarometer, 2025; Henestrosa & Kimmerle, 2024; Klein-Avraham et al., 2025). *AI use* captures the frequency of AI use both in general and specifically for science communication, including the applications used, intended future use, and the purposes for which AI is employed (e.g., Henke, 2025).

Additional measures cover perceived current and anticipated *impacts of AI* on science communication, *sources of AI-related information*, and, where applicable, the availability of AI resources and their integration within *organizational contexts*. All surveys also include *sociodemographic variables* and relevant professional roles.

Analysis

We will provide descriptive analyses across the seven dimensions and all groups. We will conduct ANOVA tests for comparable measures across groups, with special attention to similarities and differences based on conceptual assumptions, such as that communication professionals and science journalists differ in their attitudes toward AI due to distinct institutional settings and professional roles (Guenther et al., 2025; Henke, 2024).

Contribution

This study offers the first comprehensive mapping of AI use, perceptions, and literacy across a national science communication landscape, offering critical insights into evolving intersections of mediatization, AI, and society. It thereby establishes an empirical baseline for understanding AI's role in science communication and provides a point of reference for future research.

MED02 Artificial Intelligence and Professional CommunicationPractices

PP 0120 Academic cosplay in code: A critical analysis of virtual research agents

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Large language models (LLMs) are increasingly embedded in academic research, raising cross-disciplinary questions about epistemic authority and methodological practice. Across the humanities, social sciences, and media and communication studies, scholars are reflecting on LLMs' implications while a growing number of researchers use them for coding support, summarizing scholarly texts, and generating or refining research questions. Beyond task-level uses, some research projects

now assemble LLMs into multi-step pipelines presented as "agentic" research workflows. These workflows anthropomorphize LLMs through role labels (e.g., "research assistant," "reviewer"), while a human researcher "orchestrates" outputs through prompting to mimic a conventional process of knowledge production. For example, Stanford's *Virtual Lab* gives the role of "Principal Investigator" to the LLM, who, when prompted, coordinates specialist components and tool-based steps to generate SARS-CoV-2 nanobody candidates. Another example is the *Agent Laboratory* that produces literature reviews, collects data, proposes and runs machine-learning experiments, and drafts research reports, based on user prompts.

Despite the attention these systems attract, especially in STEM settings where research problems are allegedly more "structured", empirical research examining the agents themselves remains limited. We take this point of departure to study the concrete yet rhetorically powerful mechanisms through which "research" is formalized into roles, prompts, steps, and evaluation procedures. Our study begins from a Critical Code Studies premise: mechanisms implemented in source code and prompt/configuration files are not neutral. They reflect assumptions about credibility and authority and translate "proper" methodological procedure into operational decisions, while also functioning persuasively to guide—and delimit—how research ought to be conducted.

This contribution reports findings from our study of how academic research is mediated through code. We have developed a digital mixed-method approach that combines quantitative repository profiling with qualitative content analysis of programming code, treating source code as the primary "text" (alongside prompts, configuration, and documentation). We analyze 11 open-source GitHub repositories linked to academic projects that release working prototypes of multi-step pipelines with role/task decomposition and tool calls. Rather than evaluating performance, we analyze what these systems encode about research itself—how they model academic research into tasks and roles, and how assumptions about validation and credibility are built into workflows. Our goal is twofold: first, to provide a critical analysis suitable for researchers to understand and better interrogate what may be happening under the surface of their AI-enabled tools and automated workflow assistants. Second, we articulate a systematic and scalable methodological framework for tracing how epistemic cultures and imaginaries of academic inquiry are translated into computational form.

This study results in (1) a typology of how academic labor is operationalized, (2) a set of recurring design patterns of these agentic systems, and (3) a reusable digital method for studying agentic research workflows as GitHub repository artefacts. We conclude by discussing implications for trust and authority when particular visions of "good research" become packaged as reusable software and sketch the epistemological consequences if such LLM-based systems come to be used in humanities, social sciences, and media and communication studies.

MED02 Artificial Intelligence and Professional CommunicationPractices

PP 0121 Navigating visibility as reward, risk, and structural force: How Chinese editors negotiate with Weibo algorithms

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In the Algorithm Age, algorithms increasingly assist or even replace human actors in allocating online traffic and mediating visibility. While recent scholarship has illuminated how various actors, including influencers (Bishop, 2019), fans (Zhang et al., 2023), and activists (Proferes & Summers, 2019; Treré, 2019), "play the visibility game"—a framework Cotter (2019) uses to conceptualize actors' pursuit of visibility as an algorithmically governed game—it has largely focused on strategic actors driven by commercial incentives. In contrast, journalistic actors are more often guided by a public-oriented logic.

Drawing on Weibo Trending Topics as a case study, this article addresses this gap through 15 semi-structured interviews with Chinese editors across four types of media institutions: Party-oriented Official Press (POP), Audience-oriented Official Press (AOP), Market-oriented Commercial Press (MCP), and Watchdog-oriented Commercial Press (WCP). **This study examines how these editors perceive Weibo's evolving algorithms and negotiate visibility, and investigates the factors driving the similarities and distinctions in their practices.**

Our analysis reveals a hierarchy of proactivity: MCPs demonstrate the highest initiative in playing the visibility game, followed by WCPs, AOPs, and finally POPs. While editors enjoy (1) privileged access to traffic allocation, (2) amplified visibility for "positive energy" content, and (3) occasional insights into adjustments of trending rules, these "algorithmic privileges" coexist with structural constraints—namely, internal tensions between platform logic and journalistic norms, and external pressures to cautiously manage visibility. **We demonstrate how three conceptualizations of visibility—as reward, risk, and structural force—collectively shape editors' varying algorithmic practices on Weibo.** Visibility operates first and foremost as a structural force, shaped by the "specific politics of arrangement, architecture, and design" (Bucher, 2012, p. 1165) of platforms. Weibo's algorithmic architecture systematically favors legacy media by granting them greater weight for "positive-energy" content. Meanwhile, by designating the "topic host" mechanism, Weibo simultaneously incentivizes editors to boost visibility and shifts liability from the platform to content providers. Within this framework, reward and risk are inextricably linked: while increased visibility may yield user attention, traffic, and influence, it also brings heightened surveillance, scrutiny, and potential penalties. This explains why editors, particularly those at POPs, tend to cautiously negotiate, manage, or even restrict the visibility of certain content, aligning with studies on marginalized actors who adopt strategic

invisibility for self-protection (Stegeman et al., 2024). Highlighting editors' agency to negotiate with, rather than merely cater to, Weibo's algorithms, we propose the concept of "steerable algorithms" to capture deliberate efforts that direct algorithmic systems toward specific ends. Contextualized by Chinese President Xi Jinping's directive to "steer algorithms with mainstream value guidance," this concept emphasizes the situatedness of editorial practices within China's socio-political context, where regulators play a key role in governing visibility dynamics. **Ultimately, by demonstrating how visibility is negotiated within a politically bounded arena rather than on a level playing field, we extend Cotter's framework to underscore the inherently political nature of visibility.**

MED03 Communication, Visibility, and Algorithmic Infrastructures

PP 0227 Mediatizing digital infrastructure: Sustainability, sensemaking, and the European welfare state

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This paper investigates how the expansion of data-intensive digital infrastructures is mediated and made meaningful within European welfare states, focusing on Germany, Norway, and Sweden. Building on mediatization theory, it conceptualizes digital infrastructure not only as a technical or economic resource, but as a communicative and symbolic object through which sustainability, sovereignty, and public value are articulated, contested, and stabilized. As European welfare states digitalize public services and administrative functions, they increasingly operate within media logics shaped by platformization, datafication, and infrastructural visibility. Data centers, cloud services, and high-energy digital systems emerge as simultaneously indispensable and opaque foundations of the digital welfare state. While governments in Germany, Norway, and Sweden formally align digitalization with economic, social, and environmental sustainability, these infrastructures are largely developed and controlled by multinational corporations whose logics of optimization, scalability, and profit operate across national boundaries. Drawing on qualitative interviews with actors involved in producing and circulating public meanings of digital infrastructure—including digital infrastructure industry representatives, government officials, journalists, and public service media professionals—the paper analyzes expert sensemaking as a key mechanism of mediatization. It shows how sustainability is framed through narratives of innovation, efficiency, and green transition, while questions of ownership, democratic control, and long-term societal dependence remain weakly articulated in public discourse. The analysis identifies a paradox of trust characteristic of what can be described as a media welfare state: strong normative commitments to equality, universality, and public service coexist with mediated forms of legitimacy that normalize the growing infrastructural power of global platform companies. Mediatization thus contributes not only to the visibility of digital transformation, but also to the selective obscuring of its political and material consequences. By foregrounding how infrastructures are communicatively constructed rather than merely implemented, this paper advances mediatization research by demonstrating how media logics actively shape the conditions under which welfare-state sustainability is imagined, negotiated, and potentially destabilized in a hyper-digitalized European context.

MED03 Communication, Visibility, and Algorithmic Infrastructures

PP 0228 From media logic to metric logic: Engagement-driven visibility in Norwegian leaders' COVID-19 Facebook communication

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Mediatization describes the process by which political actors adapt to media logic to secure public attention. Platformization extends this transformation by structuring visibility through algorithmic ranking, where engagement metrics serve as indicators of relevance. During prolonged crises, this dynamic produces a visibility dilemma: messages intended to inform and reassure may circulate less widely than those optimized for engagement-driven selection. This study investigates how crisis message strategies in Norwegian party leaders' Facebook posts, as indicated by reactions, shares, and comments, varied during the COVID-19 pandemic and how leaders' repertoires shifted across different lockdown phases and political roles. The central argument is not that platform metrics replace media logic. Rather, metric-based visibility constitutes an additional layer that can influence which aspects of a mediatized crisis message become prominent in users' feeds.

The analysis includes 7,264 posts from twelve parliamentary party leaders, spanning from six months prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and first national lockdown in Norway, until the beginning of 2022 with the end of the third national lockdown. All posts have been manually coded using an adapted nine-category crisis strategy typology, and negative binomial models are employed to estimate associations between strategy and engagement for reactions, shares, and comments. The categories includes both crisis-normative communication and established forms of political performance, including criticism, actionable steps, self-enhancement, crisis framing, accommodative, organizational, and interorganizational messages. Engagement modes are analyzed separately, as they likely represent distinct actions: a quick reaction, redistribution to one's network, or an invitation to discussion. The study does not directly observe Facebook's ranking system; instead, it examines public metrics visible to both leaders and citizens in real time.

The results demonstrate a distinct hierarchy of messages that becomes visible. Criticism emerges as the most likely to diffuse, particularly through shares. Self-enhancement predominantly increases reactions, which represent lightweight approval, but does not significantly enhance redistribution or discussion. Actionable steps are associated with increased shares but reduced reactions, indicating selective mobilization. Crisis framing and accommodative support yield neutral or negative engagement, as do organizational and interorganizational messages. Government leaders receive significantly less engagement than opposition leaders. Over time, guidance and reassurance peak during the initial lockdown and subsequently decline as contestation, mobilization, and leader-centered performance become more prominent. These engagement patterns do not necessarily indicate endorsement; for instance, comments may reflect frustration, conflict, or coordinated attacks, and shares may disseminate critique rather than support.

This article delineates how mediatized crisis repertoires are filtered by platform metrics. In prolonged crises, metric logic amplifies conflict and performance while diminishing consistent informational and supportive communication, thereby reshaping democratic visibility and scrutiny. Elevated engagement for criticism and mobilization may reflect increased citizen demand for accountability and participation as uncertainty and fatigue intensify. Regardless, engagement-driven visibility is an important part of the communication environment that leaders must navigate, influencing which messages are most likely to be encountered, debated, and retained during crisis governance.

MED03 Communication, Visibility, and Algorithmic Infrastructures

PP 0229 The mediatization and the construction of representations of autism: Strategies of actors, devices, and communication practices in the French-speaking YouTube

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Introduction

Controversy has long been a central element of the discussions on the definitions and representations of autism. In France especially, the dominance of psychoanalysis among the psychiatric field has amplified this phenomenon. Perspectives diverge across countries, cultures, and families (Chamak, 2018), the context of deep mediatization (Hepp, 2020) amplifying the tensions, mainly because of algorithmic logics intensifying the polarization of public discourse.

This research aims to show how the mediatization of diverse representations of autism on YouTube contributes to the construction of social representations within a fragmented public sphere. The study formulates three hypotheses:

1. Editorialized mediatization by institutional actors reinforces medicalized representations of autism.
2. Algorithmically oriented engagement broadens mediatization while contributing to the fragmentation of the public sphere.
3. Representations of autism lie at the center of tensions between editorialized and individualized mediatization.

In other words, the media provides a framework for discourses on health issues by shaping representations of autism (Dachez & Navarro, 2016), and they influence how audiences perceive this condition (Jones & Harwood, 2009; Nairn et al., 2001). In this study, "mediatization" refers to the forms of media coverage, but also to a broader "process of mediatization" (Lafon, 2019).

Methodology

The corpus consists of the 100 most visible YouTube videos retrieved with the French keyword "autisme", along with all associated comments. A mixed-method computational approach was deployed: automatic lexical–thematic analysis, sentiment and civility analysis using machine-learning models, extraction of salient informational elements, and network analysis of interactions.

Together, these methods offer insight on how heterogeneous perspectives shape representations of autism, how institutional and individual actors display specific communicational strategies, and where conflicts of interests and interpretations emerge.

Findings

Three main results stand out.

First, editorialized mediatization revolves around two dominant themes: scientific expertise (e.g., neuroscience, diagnostics) and experiential knowledge (e.g., lived experience). However, algorithmic visibility is uneven: YouTube tends to promote videos relying heavily on medical or scientific terminology, whereas experience-based videos appear predominantly in lower-ranked positions.

Second, individual actors expand mediatization toward broader socio-political arenas, including gender differences, vaccine debates, and political ideologies, circulating pseudoscientific claims or conspiracy narratives.

Third, videos with a stronger scientific orientation attract more toxic and hostile comments than those centered on subjective experience, revealing conflicts not only over knowledge but over authority and legitimacy in speaking about autism.

Discussion

The mediatization of autism emerges as both fragmented and broad. This dynamic results from the scientific complexity of the characterization of autism, the plurality of social interpretations, and the entanglement of the topic with wider societal debates (science vs. pseudoscience, gender politics, distrust in institutions).

Within this environment, platforms and algorithms operate as structuring devices. By modulating the visibility and circulation of content, they influence what counts as legitimate knowledge, they shape public understandings of autism, and ultimately they contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of its social representations.

MED03 Communication, Visibility, and Algorithmic Infrastructures

PP 0230 Discourse Network 2000: Algorithmic Behavioral Environments and the 'So-Called Man'

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Contemporary discussions of mediatization increasingly foreground the role of digital platforms and their algorithmic operations in shaping social communication, cultural visibility, and political attention. Yet much of this literature remains focused on representational effects, discursive circulation, or questions of power and bias at the level of content, while leaving under-theorized the deeper infrastructural conditions through which perception, action, and intelligibility are pre-structured. This paper argues that such limitations call for a renewed engagement with German media theory, particularly Friedrich Kittler's concept of *Discourse Networks* (*Aufschreibesysteme*), as a means to rethink mediatization under conditions of algorithmic governance.

Kittler (1990) famously theorized *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* as historically specific configurations in which media technologies, institutional arrangements, and cultural techniques jointly determined what could be said, perceived, and archived. However, his framework remains anchored in inscription, storage, and transmission systems characteristic of literary, phonographic, and cinematic media. This paper contends that contemporary platform environments expose a historical blind spot in Kittler's model: discourse is no longer stabilized primarily through inscription and archival media, but through continuous computational modulation of behavior in real time. To address this shift, the paper proposes an extended framework '*Discourse Network' 2000* to conceptualize digital platforms as algorithmically governed environments that pre-structure conduct rather than merely mediate meaning.

Drawing on an analysis of algorithm-related patent documents from major social media platforms such as Instagram, the paper adopts a media-archaeological reading of patents as technical-institutional inscriptions. These documents articulate how platforms formally conceptualize recommendation systems, collaborative filtering, traffic pooling, model distillation, and seed-account mechanisms. Rather than treating these techniques as neutral tools of optimization, the paper argues that patents function as operative texts in which platforms explicitly define permissible relations between users, content, and visibility. In this sense, algorithmic patents constitute a contemporary form of *Aufschreibesysteme*: they encode anticipations of future behavior and render conduct calculable in advance.

Building on this analysis, the paper introduces the concept of behavioral environment engineering to describe how platforms orchestrate interfaces, ranking logics, feedback loops, and data models into a unified infrastructural regime. From a German media-theoretical perspective, platform algorithms should thus be understood as cultural techniques rather than symbolic representations. They are operational procedures that organize attention, temporal rhythms, and perceptual thresholds. Algorithms do not simply recommend content; they reconfigure the conditions under which action becomes likely, visible, or statistically valuable.

By extending Kittler's concept of Discourse Networks into the context of algorithmically governed digital platforms, this paper introduces *Discourse Network 2000* as a framework for understanding how platforms write, calculate, and regulate user behavior. In doing so, it advances mediatization research by moving beyond analyses of mediated communication toward a critical engagement with algorithmic behavioral environments, demonstrating how these infrastructures pre-structure perception, action, and experience for the so-called Man in the digital age.

Keywords

Algorithmic Governance, Behavioral Environment Engineering, Cultural Techniques, Discourse Networks 2000, Friedrich Kittler, The So-Called Man

MED04 Critical Perspectives on Mediatization And Communicative AI: Data Infrastructures and Markets, Democracy, Silence and Mediatized Expectations

PN 23 Communicative AI as knowledge capture and colonial landgrab

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Communicative AI represents a fundamental new stage in the evolution of deep mediatization (Couldry and Hepp 2016), but, as such, it must also be connected to broader theorisations of what datafication signifies in terms of history and political economy. This paper furthers this agenda by interpreting communicative AI within the wider framework of data colonialism (Couldry and Mejias, 2019; Mejias and Couldry 2024). By connecting AI to sociology of knowledge, it also shows how AI works to reappropriate and reorganize social relations. The paper will argue that, while communicative AI has been developed as part of advanced capitalism, it is more fully understood as data colonialism (defined as 'an emerging order for the appropriation of human life so that data can be continuously extracted form it for profit'). Data colonialism continues five centuries of colonialism's interlocking relations with capitalism: it is just the latest in a long series of colonial landgrabs. AI's place in this trajectory is clear, since generative AI treats the whole world of communicative production as its input, or, in colonial terms, its territory. From the point of view of sociology of knowledge, communicative AI is much more than a technique of computation. Communicative AI attempts to alter the social construction of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1974). GenAI, in turn, involves its users in a new type of data relation (Couldry and Mejias 2019) from which further input to large language models is garnered via our interactions with the AI interface. Seeing generative AI from a colonial perspective enables us both to foreground the changed relation to knowledge and cultural production that it represents (consider the current lawsuit by the New York Times against Open AI and Microsoft), but also to consider critically the changed social relations that will result from adopting communicative AI, and particularly GenAI. These arguments allow us to rethink the communicative potential of AI: rather than discounting human intelligence (as discourse about commercial AI so often does), we should recentre the AI debate around a humanistic perspective. Once the ambition of corporate capture behind today's commercial AI tools has been exposed, the space to imagine a different vision of AI for public or social good, not merely commercial gain, emerges.

MED04 Critical Perspectives on Mediatization And Communicative AI: Data Infrastructures and Markets, Democracy, Silence and Mediatized Expectations

PN 24 What's the value of Communicative AI? A critique of valuation in mediatized communicative domains

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The rise of communicative AI such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and other conversational agents has been discussed with increasing intensity over the last decade and can be considered a new phase in the mediatization of culture and society Hepp et al 2024). Previous research has explored its impact on everyday family life, automated social services, newsroom decision-making, and news evaluation. However, communicative AI also contributes to the expansion of markets in contemporary data capitalism. This theoretical paper examines the ways in which ComAI expands on markets within this new phase of capitalism by discussing the value-generating practices of ComAI, addressing the question: How can we understand the role of ComAI in the expansion of mediatized and datafied markets, and what implications does this expansion have for other societal valuation processes as they are subsumed mediatized dynamics in hitherto non-mediatized social domains (e.g. social, cultural and/or public value)? After placing data capitalism in relief to previous forms of capitalism and their production modes, the paper explains the ways in which data capitalism extends its ability to exploit the social by incorporating human communication into its extraction processes. Communication, it is argued, forms the foundation of all social relations, and until recently, communication research in the social sciences and the humanities has mainly centred on communicative interactions between humans. However, with the rise of communicative AI in various social spheres, one of these human agents is often replaced by a conversational agent. This shift enables machines to participate in the production of communicative acts, making these acts subject to extraction, processing, and commodification. The main part of the paper then explores how this market expansion extends into public sectors such as welfare, health, education and customer services – areas where communication has become technologically mediatized and transitioned from personal (non-extractable) interactions over the phone or in-person to (extractable) exchanges between individuals and chatbot systems. In these sectors, we see a growing automation of relationships between welfare workers and clients, medical staff and patients, teachers and students, and service providers and customers. Except the domain of customer services, these are not market relations, nor are they evaluated according to economic valuation standards. The central question is to what extent these interactions are influenced by market logics, and how this transformation will affect their underlying valuation practices within these different domains.

MED04 Critical Perspectives on Mediatization And Communicative AI: Data Infrastructures and Markets, Democracy, Silence and Mediatized Expectations

PN 25 Talking politics with Communicative AI: New opportunities or challenges for democratic discourse?

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The presentation builds on the findings from two waves of experimental studies exploring the use of Communicative AI in playful debates around controversial public issues, specifically focusing on the performative environmental activism of the Italian movement "Last Generation" ("Ultima Generazione", UG) (Mascheroni, Tosoni & Colombo, 2025). The study critically examined the implications of interactions with Communicative AI for democratic discourse on three levels: (1) the form of public debates on controversial issues as framed by Communicative AI; (2) the rhetorical—and ideological—strategies enacted by Communicative AI; and (3) the contribution of Communicative AI to participants' understanding of the complexity of a specific controversial issues. Findings of the first experiments suggest that ChatGPT tends to structure political discourse within the boundaries of rationality and formal politeness (Lakoff 1973), which may appear more desirable than the often heated exchanges in TV talk shows or political conversations on social media. However, its clearly robotic nature results in reasoning that lacks empathy and embodied experience, which participants perceived as non-human and inappropriate for political debates (Papacharissi 2010, 2015). Second, participants identified "problematic" discursive strategies used by ChatGPT, such as instrumental use of historical examples and other non-transparent operations of persuasion, to undermine UG's credibility. Third, while participants judged their participation in the debate to be informative, thanks to the contributions of the other players to the discussion, they also regarded ChatGPT's role to increasing their own understanding of this controversial environmental movement as rather limited. Participants defined ChatGPT as a "search engine for common sense discourse" that uncritically reproduces mainstream views on environmentalist movements expressed by politicians and the media, despite its potential access to more diverse and in-depth knowledge. However, the capable simulation of a civil conversation may add a layer of trustworthiness to an otherwise superficial assemblage of information reproducing hegemonic discourses. Moreover, ChatGPT tends to avoid contradicting its interlocutors and gradually sides with their viewpoint in the course of the verbal exchange. To assess whether these findings are prompt- or issue-dependent we conducted a second round of experiments involving different prompts and other controversial issues that, similarly to environmental activism, were further polarised through a sensationalist media coverage. This helped us further discuss the implications of ChatGPT's built-in sycophancy for democratic deliberations, and more in general to assess its possible role in the mediatized public debate.

MED04 Critical Perspectives on Mediatization And Communicative AI: Data Infrastructures and Markets, Democracy, Silence and Mediatized Expectations

PN 26 The silent chatbot: On the democratic significance of silence in times of Communicative AI

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This paper explores the concept of "silent" artificial intelligence (AI) and its democratic significance, offering a critique of current AI models that feed on textual input, prompts, and verbal interaction. A chatbot is expected to chat, a social robot to converse, a digital assistant to respond verbally. Yet, the absence of silence in AI models raises questions about their fidelity to human behavior. It argues that the pervasive focus on dialogic models of AI, which prioritize interaction and response, may lead to an incomplete and distorted understanding of communicative AI. Drawing parallels to Turing's works, the paper explores the dynamics of AI role-playing and the biases inherent in how AI is being conceptualized. By learning and replicating typical communication patterns, generative AI tends to gravitate toward the average or most frequent forms of expression. This tendency results in a paradox: the "silent" behaviors, such as indifference, inexpression, or even deliberate silence, are not adequately represented, accounted for or valued in communicative AI.The right to free opinion formation includes the right not to express an opinion, as well as the right to change one's opinion at any time and for any reason. Freedom of expression therefore also includes the right to remain silent, if one so chooses. Machine-generated expressions, on the other hand, are a representation of opinions that have already been expressed. Silence can be a form of expression, but silence means that one's opinions are not captured by large language models. As a result, the basis for the machine's production of expressions will not be representative of the diversity of opinions that actually exist. That is, those who choose to remain silent, or those whose voices are already marginalized, become even more invisible within AI-mediated spaces. This double erasure occurs because AI both overlooks the existence of the silent majority and amplifies the more vocal, creating a skewed and unrepresentative discourse. This paper critically examines how this omission of silence contributes to a broader undemocratic dynamic in AI-mediated environments. By favoring verbal interaction and neglecting the communicative potential of silence, large language models mediatizes the communicative situation and thus reinforce existing power imbalances and marginalize certain forms of expression. Ultimately, this paper calls for a reconsideration of what counts as communicative AI, making the case for silence be incorporated as a fundamental aspect of communication, to foster a more inclusive and democratic discourse in AI-mediated environments.

MED05 Mediatization and Platformed Cultures in Contemporary Society

PP 0444 Mediating Peace in War: Memes, Platform Logic, and Visual Resistance in Ukraine

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Peace in times of war is never neutral. Rather than a universal moral category, it is embedded in power relations, ideological frameworks, and communicative regimes shaping visibility and legitimacy (Pugh, Cooper, & Turner, 2008). In authoritarian and even democratic contexts, political peace can stabilize asymmetric relations and legitimize violence (Tanabe, 2019). The war in Ukraine has reinvigorated debates on peace practices sustaining social cohesion and negotiation (Lehti, Brylov, de Coning, & Kalenychenko, 2025; Kyselova & Landau, 2025).

From a media studies perspective, peace emerges not only as a political or ethical ideal but as a mediated construct shaped by platform architectures, algorithmic logics, and dominant narrative frames (Ortiz dos Santos, 2023). Media logics structure social and political life, influencing how social concepts are represented, circulated, and contested (Krotz, 2007, 2014). In digital environments, peace communication connects multiple discursive regimes and is conditioned by the positionality of communicators—ranging from authoritarian peace imposed by force, to transactional "peace deals," to justice-based peace grounded in human rights discourse.

This study explores how Ukrainian meme culture reclaims and redefines peace by intervening in these communicative regimes. Memes are conceptualized as mediated acts of resistance that transform peace from an instrument of domination into a justice-oriented horizon anchored in dignity, freedom, and political agency. While often dismissed as ephemeral artifacts of ironic or post-truth internet culture (Owens, 2019), memes function as "material-semiotic figurations" that actively produce, circulate, and contest political meaning (Johais & Meis, 2024). In hybrid war contexts, they operate as highly visible yet low-threshold media practices that counter propaganda, disrupt hegemonic narratives, and link everyday civic resistance with broader sociopolitical dynamics (Meis & Johais, 2023).

Empirically, the study draws on the funded project *Peace Meaning Streaming: Communication of Resistance in the Ukrainian War Context*, combining multimodal discourse and visual media analysis of: (1) large-scale monitoring of social media discussions about peace (n ≈ 1 million posts), and (2) a qualitative case study of a memes surrounding Donald Trump's and Volodymyr Zelensky's peace negotiation discourse (n = 120 memes).

Findings show that Ukrainian meme culture rearticulates peace across four media dimensions: identity construction, functional orientation toward social change, sociotechnical modes of visual communication, and spatiotemporal imaginaries of the future. Memes function as visual social critique, translating complex geopolitical conflicts into affectively charged, ironic, and highly shareable formats. Algorithmic amplification privileges sensationalism, polarization, and moral certainty, generating structural incentives that undermine deliberation and ethical accountability. From a media policy perspective, these memescapes highlight both the democratic potential and ethical risks of platform-mediated peace discourse, as visibility and virality remain deeply conditioned by algorithmic governance.

MED05 Mediatization and Platformed Cultures in Contemporary Society

PP 0445 Doing media generations within and across European families: Towards "platformised generations"?

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One of the defining features of digital transformation is platformisation that can be defined as "the penetration of infrastructures, economic processes and governmental frameworks of digital platforms in different economic sectors and spheres of life, as well as the reorganisation of cultural practices and imaginations around these platforms" (Poell et al., 2019: 1). This transformation is deeply intertwined with the ongoing process of mediatization, in which media become increasingly embedded in and shape all areas of social and cultural life (Couldry and Hepp, 2017). By examining the embeddedness of platforms in daily routines, communication and familial dynamics, it is possible to better understand how these digital infrastructures mediate not only individual behaviours but also the evolving relationships between generations and how this kind of platformed mediation may be reshaping the self-identification and discursive construction of generations.

Although "media generations" is a well-known and widely researched concept (see, e.g., Bolin, 2016), there is less research on media generations in the most recent phases of "deep mediatization" (Hepp, 2020) that include the ongoing processes of datafication and platformisation. This paper aims to advance the conceptualisation of "media generations"

in the platform era by proposing the new concept "platformised generations" and outlining its theoretical dimensions and empirical substance. The uniqueness of our analysis lies in the combination of rich interview data from three kinship generations – children, parents, and grandparents (n = 313) – within the same families (n = 104) across six European countries (Estonia, Norway, Poland, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom) and an analytical approach that treats these kinship generations as social generations in the Mannheimian sense.

The paper seeks to provide answers to the following set of empirical research questions: How do members of the three kinship generations construct and negotiate generational identities in the context of mediatization and platformisation? How prominently do digital platforms and other media figure in the discursive constructions of generations? How do members of the three generations reflect upon their social position, agency, and generational roles in platformising societies and families?

Drawing on a grounded-theory–inspired analysis of individual and group interviews, we define *platformised generations* along three analytical dimensions: generational identification in relation to platforms, social positioning within platform-shaped hierarchies, and agency in navigating platformised social and familial contexts.

The analysis reveals largely consistent patterns across national contexts. Parents' dynamic media experiences and transitory social positioning characterise them as a *transitional platformised generation*. Grandparents' more limited involvement in platformisation and intra-generational disunity indicate a *partially platformised generation*. Children, who are becoming gradually involved in platformisation while experiencing restricted agency, emerge as the *future platformised generation*.

Our analysis also shows that on the micro-level of personal, family or community life, members of all generation groups play agentive roles. Participants' critical reflections reveal considerable individual attempts to resist, control, or appropriate the platformisation process, especially by acting as *resilient cultural anchors and guardians of traditions*, *gatekeepers* and *watchdogs*, or *critical guardians and self-regulators* in families.

MED05 Mediatization and Platformed Cultures in Contemporary Society

PP 0446 "Bringing a child back to life": Digital remains, AI, and the mediatization of death on TikTok

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"It is one thing to tell the story, I have not got a problem with that. Everyone knows the story of James anyway. But to actually put a dead child's face, speaking about what happened to him, is absolutely disgusting. It is bringing a child back to life. It is wrong. To use the face and moving mouth of a child who is no long here, who has been brutally taken away from us, there are no words."

In 2023, Denise Fergus, the mother of the murdered two-year-old James Bulger spoke out against the AI-generated videos of her son circulating on TikTok. The videos depict James' likeness and describe, in a child's voice, the horrific details of his abduction and death in 1993. Fergus' outrage is understandable: the videos of her deceased son exemplify how TikTok's platform logics (i.e., recommendation algorithms through the For You Page) and affordances (i.e., CapCut, filters, short form videos, audio library, etc.) enable forms of mediatization that violate the *digital dignity* of the dead. This study explores how TikTok mediatizes death through the analysis of 132 TikTok videos, collected through hashtags including, *#grief and #rip*. Employing visual analysis, the study examines how death content is created, curated, and narrativized, while thematic analysis traces recurring patterns and ethical tensions. Drawing on Michael Hviid Jacobsen's theorisation of *spectacular death*, where modern death is highly visible, mediated, and commercialized as public spectacle, the preliminary findings of this analysis reveal that TikTok extends mediatization of death in three critical ways: TikTok enables (1) co-creation of content with the dead through their *digital remains* – the data, including images, videos, messages, voice recordings of the deceased; (2) AI-generated content of deceased individuals, creating new digital representations; and (3) death-related content that exploits tragedy for engagement and revenue.

The analysis demonstrates that such content perpetuates the mediatization of death while exposing critical failures in protecting the dignity of the dead. Though mediatization examines how death circulates and is made visible, it offers limited insights for addressing questions of consent, harm, and posthumous rights. To address this gap, this paper draws from Luciano Floridi's information ethics to conceptualise digital dignity as the ethical treatment of informational entities, including digital remains and AI representations. Floridian ethics argues that informational entities possess moral considerations that demand ethical stewardship. The analysis reveals that TikTok fails to uphold this principle. For example, James Bulger's case demonstrates this violation where a murdered child is reanimated through accessible (and free) AI platform tools whilst his family has no recourse against the dissemination of such content. Current governance frameworks cannot address such violations, leaving families without options when their dead are exploited. This study argues for digital dignity as a necessary ethical lens through which scholars can assess governance in platformed and algorithmically-mediated environments, such as TikTok. In doing so, it contributes to scholarship on mediatization, ethics, and platform studies by centring the dignity of the dead and the rights of their survivors as a neglected subject of governance.

MED05 Mediatization and Platformed Cultures in Contemporary Society

PP 0447 Visible and invisible religion in platformed publics: Mapping Instagram hashtag networks in the Anglo-American sphere

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Digital platforms such as Instagram are spaces where empowerment and creativity flourish, but where normatively problematic and harmful movements may also spread. Religion plays an ambiguous role within these dynamics. While debates about religion have often focused on institutionally recognizable traditions in the public sphere, contemporary religion increasingly appears in deinstitutionalized, hybrid, and culturally entangled forms that may remain unnoticed or unrecognized as religion.

In a platformed environment such as Instagram, these dynamics are deeply shaped by mediatized visibility regimes, including algorithmic recommendation, searchability, and aesthetic conventions. These factors privilege emotionally charged, identity-driven, and lifestyle-oriented forms of communication. Phenomena such as *tradwife* cultures, the *manosphere*, *witchy lifestyle* aesthetics, or *hijabi fashion* illustrate how content circulates and is aestheticized on Instagram while drawing—explicitly or implicitly—on religious language, symbolism, and moral frameworks, with important implications for identity formation and meaning-making across domains such as gender, ecology, politics, or health.

This paper maps traces of religion in the digitized public sphere by focusing on Instagram hashtag publics in the Anglo-American sphere. Conceptually, it connects mediatization research with scholarship on fragmented digital publics and the sociology of digital religion. It understands communities and identities as mediatized autobiographies: communicative formations embedded in the discursive, social, economic, and technological affordances of digital media. These dynamics continuously renegotiate relationships between old and new practices, forms of knowledge, and offline and online authorities.

The study proposes an analytical framework that distinguishes religion along two continua: decodability and public presence. Decodability captures whether religious references are readily legible (e.g., explicit markers such as deities, institutions, or scriptures) or implicit and ambiguous (e.g., spirituality- and morality-laden signifiers embedded in niches such as wellness, gender, eco-lifestyles, or politics). Public presence is conceptualized as a composite of perceptibility, amplified presence, and valuation (recognition, marginalization, or contestation), foregrounding the power relations that structure visibility and invisibility in digital publics. “Invisible religion” is thus not understood as absence, but as mediated meaning-making that travels through adjacent cultural fields and shapes moral imaginaries and identity work without necessarily being categorized as religious.

Empirically, the study draws on a two-wave dataset collected between September and October 2025. Based on 100 pre-defined root hashtags spanning explicit religion, spirituality, and non-religious issue domains (e.g., climate, health, lifestyle, gender, politics), I collected co-occurring hashtags and global frequency indicators. Methodologically, the analysis combines a semi-automatic annotation scheme distinguishing explicit religious, implicit religious/spiritual, and non-religious hashtags with co-occurrence network analysis. Bridging hashtags connecting religious and non-religious clusters are examined as potential gateways through which religious semantics are translated, normalized, or contested.

As an exploratory mapping project, the paper contributes to research on counterpublics and changing epistemic norms of knowledge production on social media. It demonstrates how hashtags function as technical and discursive infrastructures of publicity and how platform infrastructures and attention economies reorganize religious visibility beyond institutional communication and journalistic gatekeeping. In doing so, it shows how mediatized religion continues to mobilize identities, shape norms, and influence political discourse in contemporary democracies.

OSC01 Sustainability Narratives and the Politics of Transition

PP 0043 To mitigate or embrace division? How Finnish forest communication professionals navigate polarization in forest debates

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Polarization of public discourse has been identified as a key challenge for organizational communication in recent years. Research has found that, when communicating on polarized topics, organizations typically face negative and/or strongly divided reactions from stakeholders. However, there are mixed findings about how organizations respond to polarization or how they ought to communicate on polarized issues. Some studies find organizations resorting to evasion and ambiguity to avoid or mitigate public backlash (Denner et al. 2025). Some claim that organizations could alleviate polarization by fostering dialogue between different sides of the debate (Harrison et al. 2024). Conversely, others have questioned the feasibility of consensus-oriented communication in the contemporary polarized communication environment (Schoeneborn et al. 2024) and suggested that rather than mitigating polarization, certain organizational communication practices tend to amplify division in efforts to mobilize supportive publics (Gualtieri and Lunati 2024).

This study contributes to these debates by exploring how Finnish forest policy stakeholders engage in the public discourse over forest use and conservation. That the public debate on forests is increasingly polarized has become a widespread, commonsensical observation in the Finnish media discourse. By interviewing communication professionals working on forestry, forest policy and conservation, we aim to find out how this perceived polarization affects their communication practices and reasoning over those practices. In particular, we ask how communication professionals make sense of polarization and how this understanding is reflected in their work. While previous research has examined responses to polarization mostly through case studies of individual organizations, our study design makes a unique contribution by enabling a comparative analysis of how organizations differ in their reasoning and communicative strategies regarding issue polarization.

The research material consists of semi-structured interviews – conducted between December 2025 and February 2026 – with approximately 25 people directing communications in forest policy-related organizations, including forestry companies, advocacy groups, forest associations, environmental NGOs, activist groups, and governmental agencies. The analysis focuses on two main factors to explain variations in responses to polarization: (i) how actors perceive their position in forest debates and their (organization's) capacity to influence them; and (ii) how they make sense of polarization and its underlying causes. By demonstrating how particular understandings of polarization among communication professionals inform the communication strategies and tactics of their organizations, the findings make a significant contribution to research debates on the role of organizational communication in driving or mitigating polarization.

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OSC01 Sustainability Narratives and the Politics of Transition

PP 0044 Emplacement through local strategic communication around renewable energy initiatives

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Both in (strategic) communication practice and in academic discourse on sustainability and socio-ecological transformation processes, communication is predominantly understood in a rather pragmatic way, limited to the transfer of information (Golob et al., 2023). The increasing urgency of the climate crisis and theoretical challenges have led to a critical 'turn' in sustainability communication research (Johansson et al., 2024; Weder, 2025), which also considers the spatial dimension of transformation processes and thus the local relevance of communication. The underlying assumption is that ecological challenges, energy transition projects or participatory processes of social or cultural change are always linked to specific places. Sustainability is therefore not just an abstract model or 'meta-narrative', but a lived, situated and place-based act of communication (Weder, 2024).

For the energy transition to succeed, a broad local acceptance is required (Görland, 2025): Residents of communities are attached to places through shared historical experiences, knowledge bases and value systems (Boyd, 2017), which should not be ignored in the implementation of renewable energy solutions (Elving, 2021). Particularly, communicative relationships between people, places and infrastructures need to be built and maintained (emplacement) through appropriate strategic

communication around renewable energy projects. Problems arise when projects are communicated in a displaced manner, e.g. as technical, abstract measures or without linkage to the local living environment (Höhs, 2025, pre-publication).

Based on a case study, this project primarily aims to conceptualize strategic communication surrounding renewable energy projects in terms of their contribution to emplacement and/or displacement, drawing on interdisciplinary approaches to space (Anderson, 2025; Glasze & Mattissek, 2021). The empirical case study covers three hydropower projects in Austria, a country heavily reliant on hydropower: a first power plant that provoked extreme local resistance (2012–2019), a second that received greater acceptance (2024), and a third that is yet to be built and is imagined to be even less controversial, however, surprisingly, is again part of a public discourse around energy transition.

For a qualitative, inductive content analysis of public discourse, strategic communication materials, local media reports, and observations from information events and power plant tours were used (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to examine whether meta-narratives such as energy transition, or communication practices rooted in the local community determine the communication discourse. Additionally, semi-structured guided interviews (n = 15) were used to reflect on the results of the thematic analysis of the textual materials. All texts and interview transcripts were two-step-categorized in QCAmap and interpreted according to Mayring (Fenzl & Mayring, 2017; Mayring, 2022).

The infrastructure projects' comparison illustrates that communication practices do not only establish connections to the existing space (emplacement, natural habitat, historical experiences, knowledge bases and value systems), but also enable placemaking, i.e. the communicative creation of new spaces ('recreational areas'), which in turn has a decisive influence on whether sustainable change finds resonance and acceptance or not. The study's limitations include its exploratory character and the limited number of interviews, but it nevertheless expands current sustainability and energy communication research by presenting an initial theoretical concept for local strategic communication.

OSC01 Sustainability Narratives and the Politics of Transition

PP 0045 The Constitutive role of Sustainability communication in shaping collective future-oriented mindsets through narrative and sense-making

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In today's world, organizations face uncertainty in the regulatory environment, assessing risks related to climate change, and defining their role in poly-crisis situations. In such conditions, organizations are obliged to report on sustainability, while also communicating their long-term vision and commitment to creating more sustainable futures.

This study examines how sustainability communication, delivered through sustainability reports, plays constitutive role in shaping collective future-oriented mindsets within and around the organizations. Drawing on the Communicative Constitution of Organization (CCO) perspective and Sense-Making Theory, the study identifies sustainability reports as message framing tools with narratives for multiple stakeholders, as well as facilitating shared understandings of the responsibilities and futures.

The study is based on a qualitative content and thematic analysis of sustainability reports produced by the companies operating under evolving European sustainability reporting frameworks, such as the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). The analysis focuses on how organizations articulate long-term goals, define uncertainty and frame their role in the broader social transitions towards sustainable futures. Content analysis traces patterns of language that signal responsibility, organizational consciousness rather than formal compliance. The study also focuses on how organizations structure time-frame of the future (e.g. 2030 or 2050) and distribute agency among stakeholders, such as regulators, partners, suppliers, communities, even nature.

The findings suggest that sustainability reports can be communication tools that create and sometimes challenge collective future-oriented mindsets as organizations attempt to align and engage internal and external audiences with their visions for sustainable futures. Conducted thematic analysis of 50 EU companies' CSRD-compliant reports identifies three dominant communicated strategies: 1) an extended present narrative links the compliance with 2030 / 2050 targets or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 2) scenario-based projections acknowledge constant changes and uncertainties; 3) positioning of legacy, which focuses on inter-generational responsibility with the future generations. Moreover, the narratives of the reports also demonstrate compliance-driven, resilience-based and transformative orientations, characterized by specific language, commitment to continuous learning and stakeholder co-creation.

This study, which identifies the principles of a future-oriented organizational sustainability mindset communicated in sustainability reports, contributes to the discussion about the role of communication in creating the future, shaping sustainability policies and reporting practices and supporting more resilient and equitable transformations. It also demonstrates communication's constitutive role in organizing the future, as well as how narrative and meaning-making processes in sustainability communication help organizations navigate regulatory uncertainty while promoting long-term orientation and ethical responsibility.

OSC01 Sustainability Narratives and the Politics of Transition

PP 0046 Trust-centric conversational agent design: Challenges of defining trust for public sector

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The recent surge of Conversational Agents (CAs), increasingly infused with GenAI, in public services raises important questions about their impact on trust in public institutions. New types of interactions—more flexible, dynamic, and "empathic"—are likely to occur, with potential implications for citizens' relationships with public institutions. Critical questions include how institutional trust is affected by CAs, and how critical design can support building such trust while avoiding risks (e.g., loss of trust in institutional capabilities and values). In particular, when simple CAs are replaced with GenAI systems, how does this shift reconfigure trust relationships with public institutions?

Existing research has examined how users trust technology, automation, and AI, and how this shapes their trust in CAs. Importantly, CAs are typically designed as highly anthropomorphic automated communication tools that interact with citizens on behalf of public institutions. This carries potential benefits and diverse risks for building relationships with citizens.

We identify two challenges in current approaches. First, trust conceptualisations for CAs are often one-dimensional, focusing solely on technological or social layers. Yet layers such as automation, communication, and anthropomorphism make CAs inherently multidimensional. CAs are complex socio-technical assemblages in which different stakeholders—institutes, technology companies, citizens—play important roles in varying constellations. Any definition of trust therefore needs to account for this inherent complexity of technology deployment in concrete contexts.

Second, relatedly, there is no clear academic (or professional) consensus on what trust means in the context of CAs in the public sector. Often, trust conceptualisations based on human-to-human relationships are applied without substantiation, if any consideration is given to definition and operationalisation at all. Arguably, both building for trust and evaluating trust are therefore considerably limited from the outset.

In this conceptual paper, we address the question: *How can digital trust be conceptualised, practically implemented, and evaluated in Conversational Agent design for Public Institutions?* We formulate four proposals based on the existing body of knowledge: (1) trust definitions for CAs need to consider citizens' perspectives and positionality, institutional values and objectives, and technology-specific affordances; (2) because CAs shape how citizens experience public services, experts from multiple fields (e.g. technology, design, and public administration) need to be involved during design and evaluation; (3) trust should be a primary consideration in design processes that go beyond immediate, task-centric purposes and account for wider contexts; and (4) critical AI literacy is essential for all stakeholders—citizens, public institutions, and designers—to steer CA-design in ethically desirable directions.

We propose a trust definition tailored to public institutions, advocate for assessing the use of CAs, and outline a trust-centric approach to CA-design. We critically examine what institutional trust means in interactions with CAs, and provide a framework to support institutions in implementing GenAI for external communication. This framework is examined through a case study of a Dutch public institution, which serves as an illustrative example throughout. Overall, we aim to contribute to ongoing debates by showing how design and deployment of CAs can align with public and institutional values in ways that strengthen trust.

OSC01 Sustainability Narratives and the Politics of Transition

PP 0047 Corporate sociopolitical positioning in annual reports of German companies

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Companies are increasingly expected to take social responsibility for their business activities and the environmental and social consequences of their actions (Colleoni, 2013). Customers are considering the sustainability or ethical stances of companies when consuming their products and EU legislation requires extensive reporting on companies' sustainability activities. To meet customers' expectations but also to fulfill legal requirements, companies engage in activities summarized by the term *corporate social responsibility* (CSR) (Matten, 2012).

Simultaneously, with the recent increase in societal crises and polarization, companies are also expected to address various decisive sociopolitical issues like migration or LGBTQ rights and demonstrate their values through public statements on these issues. Corporate engagement in this area is referred to as *corporate social advocacy activism* (CSA) (Bhagwat et al., 2020). CSR and CSA refer to the relationship between companies and society, posing different challenges for corporate public communication.

Communication channels of companies have expanded considerably in recent decades with the advent of digitalization and social media. However, the annual report remains a central communication tool, particularly towards investors, providing

comprehensive information about the company's business activities. Companies fulfill a large part of their disclosure and reporting obligations in their annual reports (Stanton & Stanton, 2002). With the adoption of European law, German companies have been required since 2017 to additionally report on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues.

This study investigates the development of CSR- and CSA-related communication in the annual reports published by German DAX companies between 2015 and 2024. We apply a broad conception of positioning that includes both explicit statements with the corresponding verbal markers, e.g., for taking a side, but also implicit positioning through corporate actions. Actions involve more effort and resources but can also be considered more credible and connected with higher commitment of the company. We ask: Which socio-political topics are addressed in the annual reports? How (explicitly or implicitly) do companies position themselves on these issues? How do company characteristics such as industry sector and number of employees affect these positionings?

To answer these research questions, we apply an automated content analysis. For this, we first collected the official annual reports of the 40 companies currently in German stock index DAX. To train and test an automatic LLM-based text classifier, we will first manually code a random sample of 2000 paragraphs of the annual reports according to the coding scheme that defines the categories (1) whether and which socio-political issues are addressed, (2) whether a (pro-, contra-, or ambiguous) position of the company is expressed, (3) whether a position is expressed explicitly or/and implicitly by taking actions.

Initially, we found that topics required by the EU directive, most often related to the environment and employees' working conditions, were frequently addressed. Policy topics such as digitalization and the global economic situation are also relevant for companies, whereas CSA-related, more controversial topics such as migration were seldom addressed. In terms of positioning, implicit positioning by describing internal measures or activities dominates, while explicit positioning is rare.

OSC02 AI and Communicative Responsibility

PP 0152 Artificial Intelligence in strategic crisis communication: A mapping review of AI's impact on sense-making, accountability, and ethical governance (2000–2025)

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As Artificial Intelligence (AI) becomes embedded in organizational communication, crisis response is increasingly shaped by systems that detect signals, forecast escalation, and generate or recommend messages (Mayer, 2024; Mendes et al., 2025; Mintoo et al., 2022). This shift raises a governance problem that is still underdeveloped in organizational and strategic communication scholarship: when algorithmic systems participate in crisis sense-making and response, how are responsibility, transparency, and ethical oversight organized, and what are the implications for strategic communication practice?

This paper offers a mapping review of AI-mediated crisis communication research through a semi-systematic synthesis of peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2025 (n = 51). Following PRISMA-aligned identification and screening (Page et al., 2021) across major bibliographic databases (Scopus and Web of Science), we extracted and compared how studies (a) conceptualize AI's role across crisis phases (detection, response, recovery), (b) connect AI functionalities to crisis and strategic communication frameworks, and (c) define ethical and governance requirements. In addition, thematic patterns were consolidated to capture dominant clusters linking AI to communication practices, organizational governance, and ethics.

The findings reveal four cross-cutting insights. First, the literature frequently treats AI as an efficiency enhancer (monitoring, sentiment analysis, conversational agents, early warning, predictive analytics), but rarely integrates these capabilities into crisis theory in ways that account for algorithmic participation in attribution, decision-making, or stakeholder evaluation. Second, "governance language" is widely used (e.g., accountability, transparency, risk management), yet operational guidance is inconsistent, particularly regarding the auditability of automated recommendations, the documentation of decision pathways, and the assignment of responsibility when AI-supported actions cause harm. Third, ethical concerns are recurrent but unevenly addressed: bias and fairness, opacity, privacy and data protection, misinformation and accuracy failures, and limitations in emotionally sensitive messaging emerge as critical fault lines for crisis legitimacy. Fourth, practitioner roles are portrayed as shifting from message production toward hybrid oversight: configuring tools, setting escalation thresholds, verifying outputs, and communicating boundaries of automation under time pressure.

Building on these results, the paper reframes AI in crisis communication as "communicative infrastructure. It proposes a hybrid accountability agenda for strategic communication: human-in-the-loop safeguards for high-impact messaging, traceable decision logs for automated outputs, transparency norms for disclosure of AI involvement, and sector-specific ethical standards aligned with crisis types. This work's contribution clarifies research gaps and provides a governance-oriented pathway for developing theory and responsible AI deployment in crisis communication.

Keywords

Artificial Intelligence, crisis communication, strategic communication, AI ethics; semi-systematic literature review

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OSC02 AI and Communicative Responsibility

PP 0153 AI-based epistemic support against synthetic disinformation

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GenAI enables the rapid, large-scale production of manipulative content ranging from plausible texts and hyper-realistic images to deepfakes and doppelgänger or lookalike websites that mimic legitimate news outlets (Menczer et al., 2023). Recent investigations show how such AI-generated "local news sites" have been deployed in France at scale to disseminate disinformation (Krähenbühl, 02.11.2025). These developments raise new demands on digital resilience, the ability to navigate digital information environments critically, detect deception, and recognize manipulative mechanisms (Rodríguez-Pérez & Canel, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the study examines both the manipulative effects of synthetic disinformation and the counteracting potential of AI-based epistemic support.

RQ1: How do the information environment and the modality of synthetic disinformation affect credibility judgments and institutional trust?

RQ2: To what extent can an AI-powered chatbot serve as epistemic resource to counter disinformation?

Theoretical Approach

Research has identified content-, source- and presentation-related factors that increase the acceptance of disinformation, including emotionalized language, scapegoating, and credibility-enhancing design (Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021). Doppelgänger websites appropriate visual identity cues from trusted outlets to transfer institutional credibility and legitimacy (Winter & Krämer, 2014) to fabricated content, thereby putting organisational reputation at risk.

H1: Disinformation on doppelgänger sites will be perceived as more credible compared to lookalike sites or social media.

Visual disinformation, particularly synthetic images and deepfakes, increases perceived authenticity and complicates human detection (Peng et al., 2023). The TIME framework (Sundar, 2008) explains such effects through digital affordances that activate heuristics such as realism.

H2: Deepfake-enhanced disinformation will be perceived as more credible than text-plus-image formats.

GenAI offers new opportunities for verification, but with clear limitations. Chatbots can help identify falsehood (Kuznetsova et al., 2025) but do not automatically improve judgment accuracy (DeVerna et al., 2024), thereby remaining prone to hallucinations (Saju et al., 2025). Their epistemic potential therefore lies less in authoritative factchecking and more in fostering vigilance and reflective evaluation (Hornsey et al., 2025).

H3: A chatbot designed to proactively highlighting verification strategies will reduce the perceived credibility of disinformation more strongly than a standard chatbot.

Method

The study employs a randomized 2 x 2 x 2 x 3 between-subjects online experiment manipulating information environment (news website vs. social media), source (doppelgänger vs. lookalike site), modality (text+image vs. text+deepfake), and chatbot condition (none, standard, verification-oriented).

Participants in Germany are exposed to a fabricated story inspired by a real incident in summer 2025, claiming that the Swiss Federal Council is discussing a nationwide ban on foreigners' access to public swimming pools. The story is presented using emotionalized language and scapegoating, followed by optional interaction with the assigned chatbot.

Power analysis (small-to-medium effect size (f = .175)) indicates a required sample size of N = 744. Dependent variables include the credibility of the disinformation, trust in political institutions, and perception of Switzerland. Control variables include main news sources, attitude towards AI (Stein et al., 2024), political self-placement and xenophobia (Wilson-Daily et al., 2018). The instrument is currently under ethical review.

Expected Contribution

The study advances understanding of how different forms of AI assistance can function as epistemic resources to strengthen critical evaluation of content and can serve to protect organizational reputation in disinformation-prone communication environments.

OSC02 AI and Communicative Responsibility

PP 0154 Framing corporate social (ir)responsibility: A comparison between generative AI and the news media

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The rapid adoption of generative AI like ChatGPT has fundamentally transformed how individuals access information (Hirvonen et al., 2024). As generative AI increasingly serves as an information medium alongside traditional news media (Zhao et al., 2025). According to framing theory (Entman, 1993), media's emphasis on certain aspects of issues over others, known as framing, has the potential to shape public perceptions of societal issues.

One particularly relevant domain for examining framing is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which refers to organizations' efforts to address social issues and environmental challenges such as corporate misconduct and greenwashing, beyond their economic pursuits (O'Connor, 2022). CSR issues have become central to public debates about corporate accountability, challenging organizations' legitimacy (Fassin & Van Rossem, 2009). News media traditionally serve as primary information sources of CSR (Vogler & Eisenegger, 2021), previous research has examined frames used in CSR news (e.g., Van den Heijkant & Vliegenthart, 2018; Lee & Riffe, 2019), but little is known about how generative AI constructs narratives around CSR issues.

Despite its growing popularity, generative AI has been criticized for producing biased and potentially inaccurate content with questionable information sources (Weidinger et al., 2022), which is particularly problematic in CSR contexts where multiple stakeholders and viewpoints are involved (Vos, 2003). If generative AI frames CSR issues differently than news media, for instance, by omitting critical perspectives, or presenting unverified claims, it could distort public understanding and opinion-making of organizational responsibility and accountability, potentially allowing problematic corporate behaviors or unfairly damaging organizational reputations (Vogler & Eisenegger, 2021). Therefore, it is critical to understand:

To what extent and how do frames about corporate social (ir)responsibility in AI-generated information and news media coverage differ?

This study will employ quantitative content analysis. First, we will retrieve 300–400 CSR-related news articles from Dutch newspapers (e.g., *De Telegraaf*, *De Volkskrant*) via *LexisNexis*, following established CSR news framing approaches (e.g., Lunenberg et al., 2016). We will then draw on Van den Heijkant and Vliegenthart's (2018) six implicit CSR frames and code: economic performance & growth, society's welfare, environmental protection, global business activities & responsibilities, fair & sustainable products, and educational & charitable programs.

After coding the news articles, we will collect 300–400 matched AI-generated responses from ChatGPT using tailored prompts that mirror each news article's content focus. For instance, if a news article covers a specific greenwashing scandal involving a company, the prompt will ask, "Tell me about Company A and its greenwashing accusations". This sequential approach ensures we can develop and refine the codebook based on news media patterns before applying it to AI-generated content, thereby enhancing comparability between the two information sources.

By systematically comparing CSR frames across news media and generative AI, this study provides empirical evidence of whether and how generative AI portrays organizational accountability. Unlike news media with editorial and fact checking, AI operates through probabilistic models and can include biases. The findings advance framing research by examining the emerging information source, while addressing AI's growing role in information dissemination that may transform public opinion-making about organizations.

OSC02 AI and Communicative Responsibility

PP 0155 Human connection and artificial intelligence in strategic communication: A systematic review and professional perspectives

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The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence into strategic communication has reshaped both academic debate and professional practice, raising questions about ethics, professional roles and the preservation of human judgement in increasingly automated environments. While a growing body of research addresses AI in communication, existing scholarship remains dispersed and only partially connected to the everyday realities of communication agencies. This paper addresses this gap by combining a systematic review of the international literature on Artificial Intelligence and strategic communication with empirical evidence drawn from a survey of communication and public relations professionals working in agencies. The systematic review identifies dominant theoretical perspectives, methodological trends and recurring themes in the field, with particular attention to ethics, transparency, human oversight and the transformation of professional competencies. The empirical component is based on a quantitative survey of agency professionals in Portugal, examining patterns of AI adoption, perceived opportunities and risks, impacts on professional autonomy and decision making, and attitudes

towards human responsibility and ethical judgement in AI-supported communication processes. Findings suggest a growing convergence between academic concerns and professional perceptions, especially regarding trust, accountability and the need to maintain human control over strategic decisions. At the same time, the results reveal significant tensions between normative ethical frameworks proposed in the literature and the operational constraints faced by agencies, including competitive pressure, efficiency demands and client expectations. AI is predominantly understood as a support technology rather than a replacement for human strategic thinking, yet its expanding role challenges established notions of authorship, responsibility and human connection in strategic communication. By integrating insights from scholarly research and professional practice, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of AI as a socio-technical phenomenon in strategic communication. It argues for closer dialogue between academia and industry and for the development of context-sensitive governance and ethical guidelines that reinforce human agency while enabling the responsible use of AI in hybrid communication environments.

OSC02 AI and Communicative Responsibility

PP 0156 Negotiating trust in automated public services

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Over the past decade, the digitalisation of public services across the European Union has undergone a process of steady consolidation. While infrastructural availability has significantly improved, this transformation has revealed persistent socio-cultural and institutional challenges, particularly regarding citizens' digital skills and trust in public administration. The Italian case is emblematic of these tensions: despite rapidly surpassing the EU average in the provision of digital public services, levels of basic digital competence among citizens remain comparatively low (Eurostat, 2025). This misalignment suggests that digital transformation cannot be understood solely as a technical or infrastructural process, but rather as a socio-technical reconfiguration with profound implications for public value and institutional trust.

Drawing on the sociological tradition of trust (Luhmann, 1968; Giddens, 1990), this study examines how the platformisation and automation of local public services reshape the conditions under which public trust is produced, negotiated, and potentially eroded. Trust is conceptualised as a relational phenomenon that becomes particularly salient in contexts of uncertainty and systemic complexity, where citizens are required to delegate decisions and actions to expert systems. Building on Giddens' notion of trust in expert systems and on Grimmelikhuijsen's analytical framework (2012), institutional trust is operationalised through three dimensions-competence, benevolence, and honesty- allowing for an empirical investigation of how trust is assessed through everyday interactions with digital public services.

The analysis focuses on local and proximity-based services, understood as key sites of encounter between citizens and institutions. Historically grounded in face-to-face interactions and territorial proximity, these services are increasingly reorganised through centralised, standardised, and platform-based models. Such transformations are often accompanied by growing dependence on third-party technological providers, which can introduce new forms of opacity, organisational vulnerability, and accountability gaps. Rather than neutral tools of inclusion, digital infrastructures may thus contribute to the production of stratified forms of digital citizenship, where access to formally universal rights becomes conditional upon technical resources, skills, and digital capital.

The study adopts a mixed-methods design. The qualitative component consists of 41 in-depth interviews with local administrators, digital transformation officers, IT professionals, service managers, and public communicators, exploring how automation and artificial intelligence are implemented, governed, and discursively framed at the local level. The quantitative component draws on a 2025 survey conducted in Italy (N = 327), investigating citizens' perceptions of which public services are most suitable for automation and the opportunities and risks associated with these processes.

By integrating institutional and citizen perspectives, the study addresses two main research questions: how local governments negotiate citizens' trust in the context of automated public services, and which services are perceived as most susceptible to automation, with what implications. The findings contribute to ongoing debates on digital governance, public sector automation, and trust by highlighting the tensions between efficiency-driven digital agendas and the lived experiences of citizens. Ultimately, the paper argues that the automation of public services represents a critical "shifting ground" for public administration, where the future of trust depends not only on technological innovation, but on governance arrangements capable of ensuring transparency, accountability, human oversight, and social inclusion.

OSC03 Trust, Resilience and Public Sector Communication

PP 0484 Strategic communication under hybrid threats: A message and narrative life-cycle model

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Democratic governments operate under increasingly difficult conditions, as the status of global affairs has been described as a "permacrisis", i.e., an extended period of instability and insecurity. Within this environment, hybrid threats (information

manipulation, cyber attacks, sabotage, election interference etc) represent a significant component, as they specifically target democratic values and aim to erode trust between citizens and governing institutions.

Elections, in particular, represent critical moments of heightened informational vulnerability, during which governments are simultaneously expected to safeguard an open and correct political competition, counter interference, and justify extraordinary measures when needed.

Responses to hybrid threats increasingly converge towards a "whole of society" response, with strategic communication at its core. Governments are expected not only to act, but to explain, justify, and defend their actions in real time, under intense scrutiny and in adversarial information environments.

Existing research and policy frameworks tend to approach strategic communication in a static or message-centric manner, focusing on message production, narrative content, or threat typologies. Less attention has been paid to what happens after official communication is released into contested information environments, how messages are reframed, challenged, or stabilized over time, and how institutions respond to these dynamics.

The proposed study addresses this gap by proposing and empirically testing a strategic message and narrative life-cycle model, tailored to hybrid-threat contexts, building on Kruijver, K., Finlayson, N.B., Cadet, B. et al (2025), Sergeeva & Winch (2021) and Holtzhausen & Zerfass (2014).

Drawing on strategic communication and strategic narrative scholarship, as well as framing theory, and hybrid threat/FIMI literature, the model conceptualizes governmental communication as a process rather than a discrete act. It distinguishes three analytically defined phases: (1) authoritative emission and initial sense-making, (2) mediated contestation and competitive reframing, and (3) institutional reaction, drift, or deferred closure. Central to the model is the concept of life-cycle closure, defined not as consensus or belief change, but as the stabilization of communicative dynamics once authorities cease introducing new frames and narratives persist without institutional fuel.

Empirically, the study adopts a qualitative, process-oriented multiple-case design. The primary case examines public communication surrounding the annulment of Romania's 2024 presidential elections, analyzed over a bounded 90-day phase following the first announcement. A secondary, contrastive case, Moldova's 2025 parliamentary elections, is used to verify whether the same life-cycle logic holds under conditions of more explicit attribution of foreign interference and earlier institutional intervention. Data include official statements, mainstream media coverage, and a purposive sample of high-engagement social media posts.

By tracing how strategic messages evolve across phases, the study aims to investigate how early framing choices and delayed or weak interventions contribute to narrative fragmentation and long-term polarization. The proposed contribution is threefold: advancing a process-oriented life-cycle model of strategic communication; operationalizing closure and non-closure as analytical outcomes; and providing an empirically grounded framework for evaluating governmental communication under hybrid threats.

OSC03 Trust, Resilience and Public Sector Communication

PP 0485 Building trust under hybrid threats: A community resilience barometer against disinformation

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The use of digital technologies has enhanced the communication capacities of institutions and increased risks of disinformation as well as blurred the boundaries between institutional messaging and partisan discourse (Michailidou 2014; OECD 2024). In times of global uncertainty and shifting societal expectations, this phenomenon is exacerbated by structural distrust and non-transparency in institutional communication, particularly in post-authoritarian contexts where public trust in media is fragile (Tsetsura & Luoma-aho 2020). Several studies showed that hybrid public relations practices can reinforce opacity in communication environments, undermining citizens' ability to assess credibility (Tsetsura & Kruckeberg 2017; Lovari & Belluati 2023). State-sponsored operations—particularly from Russia and China —exploit weaknesses in institutional communication and target divided audiences with tailored narratives (Luoma-aho et. al. 2021).

Social media has become an arena for experimenting with new forms of public sector communication (Canel & Luoma-aho 2019; Ducci et al. 2021). These online strategies aim to enhance the quality of public debate, promote transparency, and foster engagement with citizens (Barisione et al. 2019; D'Ambrosi & Parito 2022). However, the effectiveness of transparency-driven communication faces a major challenge: the growing spread of disinformation, and the increasing influence of digital platforms and AI-driven systems on organizations, which further complicates efforts to improve the quality of public sector communication (Zerfass et al. 2023; Lovari & De Rosa 2025).

This project examines this complex phenomenon across three countries: Latvia, Italy, and the United States. Latvia is a frontline EU state bordering Russia, with Russian-speaking minorities particularly exposed to Kremlin-origin narratives (Rönngren 2025). Italy, despite being geographically distant, exhibits high vulnerability due to targeted disinformation

campaigns affecting Russian and Ukrainian-speaking communities (Porrino 2025). The United States, with its decentralized communication system and powerful online platforms, provides a global benchmark for understanding how unregulated digital ecosystems interact with public sector communication (Bradford 2023).

To respond to these complex challenges, the study focuses on youth as a critical demographic, within digital information flows (Wilska & Nyrhinen 2025). It examines how young people evaluate credibility, interact with institutional messaging, depending on their attitude profiles identified by previous research (Tsetsura et. al. 2025). The project aims to develop the first Community Resilience Barometer, which will function as a strategic tool for identifying vulnerabilities—mapping high-risk topics and channels—and for strengthening community-based resistance to disinformation, by translating these insights into proactive response actions.

Methodologically, the research combines comparative case analysis and a survey of university students enrolled in humanities and social sciences courses across Latvia, Italy, and the USA. By mapping communicative choices of selecting, perceiving, and reacting to public institution messages, the study will examine which messages are most trusted by different groups of young people and what factors could potentially predict misinformation efficacy. The study will help to shed light on the misinformation resilience mechanisms and to advance our understanding of how to build more transparent, inclusive, and trusted systems of public communication. By strengthening local resilience mechanisms, the project directly supports EU and NATO strategic objectives against foreign information manipulation (EEAS 2025).

OSC03 Trust, Resilience and Public Sector Communication

PP 0486 Strategic communication for sustainability and public health challenges: Bringing research and institutional and social cooperation in Spain

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Based on applications of evolutionary and cultivation theory to public relations, Werder (2023) introduces the concept of sustainability as an evolutionary framework in which strategic communication plays a significant role. Over the past few decades, various frameworks associated with sustainability in corporations and public sectors have gained popularity, even leading to the development of diverse greenwashing strategies. However, more recently, climate change has become one of the most controversial and polarising issues in the political arena, a context that also affects other topics associated with climate change, including certain health issues.

Skin cancer is one of the diseases associated with climate change, specifically high levels of UV exposure. It is considered one of the most prevalent types of cancer worldwide, with 1.5 million new cases in 2022 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022), and it has a significant impact on national public health systems. Spain is a country that receives high levels of solar radiation throughout the year and currently faces an epidemiological situation concerning skin cancer. According to the Academia Española de Dermatología y Venereología (2023), more than 78,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, with an expected increase until 2040. Therefore, effective preventive communication is an urgent priority for health systems (Author1, Krstić & Ćorić, 2021).

This work presents the findings of the XXXXX project, which is part of a strategic approach aimed at social change within Sustainable Development Goal SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, which contribute to improving communication in the prevention of skin cancer and recognises the role of strategic communication professionals in promoting preventive behaviours and combating misinformation in the field of health and the effects of climate change. This research project, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, used an extended methodological triangulation. It made a concrete contribution to the selected challenge by generating knowledge about the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the at-risk population in relation to photoprotection and social media content; scientifically evaluating strategic preventive communication content and identifying areas for improvement; and developing evidence-based recommendations for specialist communicators, with direct transfer to patient associations, civil society associations and scientific foundations.

All project results have practical applicability for prevention communication agents. This has taken the form of recommendations and workshops that have been directly transferred to patient associations, medical foundations, health institutions—all project beneficiaries—and the Spanish Ministry of Health. Moreover, these outputs have engaged public health institutions in the creation of a collaborative network with civil society, medical and patient associations, working together on disease prevention in the context of increased UV radiation due to climate change.

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OSC03 Trust, Resilience and Public Sector Communication

PP 0487 Gender-related issues as shifting grounds for public sector communication. Risks and constraints in EU institutional campaigns

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In a context of deep societal uncertainty, digital fragmentation, and growing political polarization, public sector organisations are increasingly required to redefine their strategic communication roles. Public communication has progressively assumed the function of a strategic tool for fostering an inclusive society, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic, as institutions have intensified the adoption of communication strategies aimed at promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities. Within this scenario, gender-related issues have emerged as particularly sensitive objects of public sector communication: while central to contemporary public policy agendas, they constitute highly contested and shifting grounds, exposing institutions to communicative, organisational, and reputational risks.

This tension is particularly evident in the European Union, where ambitious gender equality frameworks, integrated within a gender mainstreaming and intersectional perspective – as reflected in policy documents such as the *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* – are frequently perceived as risky due to heterogeneous socio-cultural sensitivities across Member States, complicating their translation into institutional communication practices.

Based on these premises, this study investigates how, over the last five years (2020–2024), the European Union has communicated gender-related issues through institutional campaigns with the main aim of testing the hypothesis that the sensitive and contested nature of these issues represents a significant risk to the effective and intersectional translation of policy frameworks into communicative practices.

To address these issues, the study poses two research questions: (1) how are EU gender-related communication campaigns disseminated across platforms and channels, and which risks emerge in relation to dissemination strategies and audience engagement? (2) how are gender-related themes framed within these campaigns, and which risks arise in terms of inclusivity and representation?

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach based on media content analysis of a selected sample of EU institutional campaigns released over the last five years – *CharactHer* (2021), *Keep Your Eyes Open* (2023), *#EndGenderSte reotypes* (2023), and *Spot the Violence / Stop the Violence* (2024) – selected according to criteria of topical diversity, target audience segmentation, strategic variation, and dissemination practices.

The findings highlight recurring structural, socio-cultural, and political risks that limit the transformative potential of EU gender-sensitive communication. Structurally, campaigns often rely on fragmented dissemination strategies, limited cross-platform coordination, and predominantly one-way communication models, reducing engagement and adaptability to diverse publics. From a socio-cultural perspective, while inclusivity is a declared objective, intersectionality is only partially addressed, with a persistent reliance on binary gender representations and performative portrayals that risk reproducing stereotypes or symbolic inclusion. Politically, communicative choices are shaped by a cautious balancing of normative commitments and ideological sensitivities, resulting in diluted narratives and limited engagement with more contentious identity-related dimensions of gender equality.

By showing the persistent tension between ambitious EU policy goals and constrained communicative practices, this study opens up further research aimed at examining more closely the role of public communicators in mediating political sensitivities and institutional mandates in the framing of gender equality, as well as developing operational recommendation, moving toward a transformative project for gender equality in EU public communication.

OSC03 Trust, Resilience and Public Sector Communication

PP 0488 CISEELAP_2: The role of internal communication in public sector wellbeing

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Objectives and conceptual framework

CISEELAP_2 extends the study initiated in Barcelona to Rubí, Terrassa, Viladecans and Girona city councils, to analyze and compare how internal communication (IC) strengthens organisational wellbeing in Catalan local public administrations.

CISEELAP_2 builds on the conceptual framework of the CISEELAP_1 project, which positions IC as an essential strategic function for emotional wellbeing and organisational cohesion. Grounded in social exchange theory (Homans, 1974) and dialogic communication (Habermas, 1984), it incorporates the PR models of Grunig and Hunt (1984, 2003) and the contributions of Verčič, Zerfass and Vercic (2015), Yue and Men (2019), and FitzPatrick (2022) on communicative leadership and two-way communication. CISEELAP_2 broadens the approach through a comparative and territorial perspective, examining how IC, understood as a relational and strategic practice (Heide and Simonsson, 2021), contributes to wellbeing and a sense of belonging across different local administrations, becoming a driver of legitimacy and institutional sustainability.

Hypotheses and methodology

(H1) IC positively influences workers' emotional health.
(H2) Good emotional health strengthens workers' sense of belonging.
(H3) IC positively influences workers' sense of belonging.
(H4) Good emotional health strengthens the influence of the different dimensions of IC (channel, content and communicative intentionality) on the sense of belonging with the city council.

The methodology is mixed, sequential and comparative, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. It includes in-depth interviews and focus groups with IC managers and technical staff from the city councils, as well as a survey targeting municipal employees. The analysis integrates statistical procedures and thematic coding to ensure reliability and comparability across municipalities, making it possible to identify patterns, differences and common factors that explain how IC affects emotional and organisational wellbeing in Catalan local government.

Expected results

Although fieldwork is ongoing, the results are expected to show a positive correlation between the quality of IC and workers' emotional wellbeing, as observed in CISEELAP_1. Accessible channels, content oriented towards interpersonal relationships, and communication models based on active listening and transparency are expected to generate a greater positive impact. In addition, the study will identify levels of communicative maturity across local administrations, providing an overall view of the state of IC in the Catalan public sector.

This project strengthens the research agenda launched in CISEELAP_1, underscoring internal communication as a strategic lever for wellbeing and institutional cohesion. Expanding the study to additional municipalities, the second phase develops a comparative, people-centered model of public communication that can guide more empathetic, participatory, and sustainable organisational policies. Anticipated findings will help advance a wellbeing-oriented communication culture, where transparency, trust, and emotional connection become fundamental pillars of contemporary public leadership across local administrations and services.

The project is funded by the Agency for the Management of University and Research Grants of the Catalonian Government.

OSC04 AI, Governance and Organisational Futures

PP 0596 Strategic communicators' adoption of artificial intelligence tools through the lens of the technology acceptance model

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Strategic communicators' adoption of artificial intelligence tools through the lens of the technology acceptance model

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping advertising by enhancing efficiency, automation, and decision-making processes. While research has focused mainly on technical applications and consumer impact, little is known about how communication professionals themselves perceive and adopt these tools. This study addresses that gap by examining the experiences, attitudes, and challenges of marketers through the lens of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). By offering qualitative insight, the study proposes directions for extending TAM in the context of strategic communication professionals, suggesting that ethical concerns may act as additional determinants of AI adoption.

The present study uses a qualitative approach to explore how communication professionals perceive and adopt AI tools. With the help of in-depth interviews with seventeen participants (age 25–55 years) from France, Germany, Poland, and Romania, we aimed to explore the social phenomenon of AI adoption in the professional context. Given the exploratory nature of our study, we opt for a qualitative research design that captures rich narratives revealing participants' interpretations, thoughts, and feelings, offering insights. Data was collected from communication professionals working for multinational European-centered corporations. We reached out to professionals who fit our profile through LinkedIn, a social media platform highly used for professional communication. The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis reveals that AI is primarily valued for streamlining tasks, automating processes, and overcoming creative blocks, while also enhancing productivity and offering a competitive edge in workplace hierarchies. At the same time, participants voiced concerns about authenticity, loss of depth in communication, and the ethical implications of relying on AI. These concerns extend beyond the traditional TAM framework, raising issues such as content ownership, privacy, and trust, as well as the risks of bias, misinformation, and over-reliance on automation. Together, the findings show that AI is increasingly seen as an essential support tool, adopted with both enthusiasm and caution, as professionals navigate its opportunities and risks.

From a managerial perspective, the study underscores the importance of a balanced approach to AI adoption that aligns technological efficiency with ethical integrity and employee empowerment. Organizations should treat AI proficiency as a core competency, support continuous upskilling, and implement clear ethical and data governance guidelines to address ownership, privacy, and trust. AI-related performance metrics should still value human judgment and originality. In line with previous studies, prioritizing AI training can reduce risks and strengthen professionals' AI ethics expertise, reinforcing that AI adoption in advertising remains a double-edged sword.

OSC04 AI, Governance and Organisational Futures

PP 0597 From technical training to situated judgement: Reframing strategic communication for AI-ready workforces

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As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes embedded across workplace infrastructures, a gap has emerged between policy ambitions for AI-ready workforces and employees' lived realities of using these systems. Healthcare professionals understand that decision-support systems can produce errors yet fail to identify inappropriate recommendations under time pressure. Customer-service representatives know that AI-generated responses may be contextually inappropriate but lack judgement frameworks to recognise problematic outputs in practice. Despite AI literacy training initiatives since 2020, employees consistently struggle when algorithmic systems become components of their work. These recurring failures reveal fundamental gaps in how organisations strategically communicate about and implement AI systems.

Drawing on critical perspectives on workplace technology that examine how algorithmic systems reconfigure worker agency and organisational control (Kellogg et al., 2020), this research examines three communicative tensions that sustain the implementation gap. First, technical instruction is framed as sufficient while empirical evidence indicates situated judgement requires different approaches, creating internal messaging that deflects responsibility for genuine capability development. Second, external accountability pressures constrain organisational communication strategies toward credential-based metrics that favour standardised knowledge over contextual competence. Third, discrepancies between management communication and worker expertise result in conflicting definitions of AI readiness. Organisations claim that contextual training is impractical to systematise, while employees identify it as what they need. These tensions produce a persistent outcome: employees who possess abstract algorithmic understanding but cannot evaluate outputs or integrate system behaviour with domain expertise.

Existing frameworks recognise both conceptual knowledge and practical competencies as essential (Long & Magerko, 2020), yet remain unclear about developing situated judgement in practice. This ambiguity enables a problematic organisational default: communication and training strategies systematically privilege technical knowledge while neglecting judgement-in-context.

The research employs a multi-method qualitative approach combining semi-structured interviews with AI professionals and training designers, comparative analysis of documented training practices, and systematic literature synthesis, enabling triangulation across professional expertise, documented practices, and theoretical frameworks. It proposes 'situated AI literacy' as a strategic communication reframing positioning literacy as judgement-in-context rather than abstract knowledge. The framework suggests three shifts: judgement-first communication design centring employee decision-making rather than technical features, contextual competence development through authentic decision scenarios integrated into organisational practices, and accountability reallocation from individual employees toward organisational systems. Professional fields routinely develop contextual capabilities through case-based learning and supervised practice, suggesting organisational communication can operationalise these approaches.

The implications challenge organisations to redesign strategic communication around AI deployment, prioritising employee competence development over compliance metrics and centring employee voice in defining readiness. As organisations navigate AI integration, communication practices must evolve from information transmission to capacity building, from individual responsibility to systemic accountability, and from technical expertise to situated judgement as the foundation of AI-ready workforces.

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OSC04 AI, Governance and Organisational Futures

PP 0598 Mapping AI research in corporate communications

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a major driver of change in corporate communications, reshaping how companies manage purposeful communication activities (Wang et al., 2025; Zerfass et al., 2020). We conduct a scoping review of AI research in corporate communications, conceptualised as all purposeful communication activities of corporate actors (Zerfass & Link, 2022). The review maps (RQ1) knowledge production (e.g., authorship patterns), (RQ2) theoretical foundations (e.g., definitions of AI and theoretical lenses), (RQ3) methodological approaches (e.g., study designs), and (RQ4) recurring research gaps.

Following the PRISMA guidelines for scoping reviews, we conducted a structured literature search in the academic databases Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO. We screened English-language journal articles using keyword combinations in titles and abstracts: ("artificial intelligence" OR "AI") AND ("corporate communication*" OR "strategic communication" OR "public relations" OR "PR" OR "internal communication" OR "external communication" OR "communication management"). After eligibility assessment, the final dataset comprises 125 articles published between 2018 and 2025.

Findings for RQ1 indicate a broad but geographically uneven knowledge base: research is strongly concentrated in the Global North, while comparative and Global South perspectives remain limited. The great majority of articles report empirical research, whereas conceptual and methodological contributions play a minor role. Regarding RQ2, theoretical foundations are fragmented, with recurrent reliance on technology acceptance and adoption frameworks (e.g., the Technology Acceptance Model and related models), complemented by socio-technical and human-machine interaction perspectives (e.g., Anthropomorphism, Computers as Social Actors). Notably, almost half of the articles lack a clear definition of AI. Research domains cluster around tool- and practice-focused topics such as workflow automation and the use of chatbots. Other prominent topics include AI adoption and questions of ethics and governance. For RQ3, empirical studies are dominated by qualitative interviews, cross-sectional surveys, and experiments. Longitudinal, computational, and mixed-method approaches remain rare. Regarding RQ4, the literature repeatedly highlights the need for replication, validated operationalisations, and stronger designs (e.g., controlled and longitudinal studies with more diverse, representative samples). Theoretically, authors call for greater consolidation (e.g., shared conceptual vocabularies and data ontologies) and for relational and governance-oriented perspectives on AI-mediated corporate communication.

Overall, the review provides a structured overview of a rapidly expanding but fractured field and outlines priorities for future research on AI's organisational, relational, and societal implications in corporate communications.

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OSC04 AI, Governance and Organisational Futures

PP 0599 Generative AI as a contested institutional issue: A study of Swiss higher education institutions

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This paper examines how Swiss higher education institutions (HEIs) have responded to the emergence of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) between late 2022 and early 2025. Drawing on a comparative qualitative policy analysis of 17 institutions, it investigates how institutional identity, strategic positioning, and projected image shape GenAI-related policies and public communication. While existing scholarship has explored GenAI's implications for teaching and learning (Radhwan, 2025), research practices (Yusuf, Pervin, Román-González, & Noor, 2024), and academic integrity (Bozkurt, 2024), less is known about how universities respond organizationally and communicatively to this technological shift. The paper addresses two research questions: (1) Which expectations and/or concerns do key stakeholders express regarding the use of GenAI by HEIs? (2) How have Swiss HEIs responded to external pressures linked to the rise of GenAI through institutional policies, public communication strategies, and other mechanisms? Conceptually, the study combines three theoretical strands. First, it adopts a multi-constituency perspective that conceptualizes HEIs as organizations embedded in stakeholder-dense environments characterized by plural, competing, and evolving expectations (Jongbloed, Enders, & Salerno, 2008). GenAI intensifies these dynamics: policymakers and funding bodies emphasize accountability and responsible innovation, industry actors stress employability and digital skills, academics express concerns regarding epistemic integrity and authorship, and students demand clarity and fairness. Second, drawing on institutional logics theory (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), the study examines how responses vary according to institutional orientation and positionality. In Switzerland, federal institutes of technology operate in global scientific networks and tend to adopt innovation-forward framings, whereas cantonal universities and universities of applied sciences respond more directly to regional professional communities, labor market needs, and local legitimacy demands (Thoenig & Paradeise, 2016).Third, insights from organizational identity and projected image (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013) inform how HEIs use GenAI guidelines and public statements not only as operational tools but also as symbolic acts of credibility, responsibility, and strategic positioning. As Alexander, Giesen, and Mast (2006) argue, institutions engage in performative communication to sustain legitimacy amid shifting expectations. Switzerland provides a particularly relevant case due to high institutional autonomy and the absence of a national AI strategy. While the federal government has issued broad framings on AI between 2019 and 2025, it has refrained from defining a centralized strategy, leaving HEIs considerable discretion (Stratey, 2025). This decentralization generates variation in interpreting external expectations and constructing guidelines.

Methodologically, the study adopts a comparative qualitative policy analysis (Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017). Seventeen HEIs were selected to capture the diversity of the Swiss system, including ten cantonal universities, two federal institutes of technology, and five universities of applied sciences. Data were collected from (a) the ETER database to map structural and academic profiles; (b) institutional websites to identify GenAI-related guidelines, strategy documents, and governance structures; (c) the Factiva database to analyze media coverage; and (d) the Wayback Machine to reconstruct the temporal emergence of GenAI-related communication. Stakeholder salience analysis (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997) was conducted to map pressures from policy actors, funding bodies, industry, students, academics, media, and civil society.

OSC04 AI, Governance and Organisational Futures

PP 0600 From hesitation to digital transformation. Paths of generative AI adoption and communicative challenges in Italian universities

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Among other organizations, higher education institutions are challenged by the rise of Generative Artificial Intelligence. Both platformization and AI technologies are reshaping teaching, research, and strategic communication across universities worldwide (Molina & Medina, 2025). Digital platforms and AI-based solutions now mediate the relationships between institutions, students, and society, also raising epistemic ethical concerns. UNESCO's report (2021) highlights the influence of digitalization in redefining curricula and pedagogical forms. Utopian promises and dystopian fears (Wang et al. 2024) about AI tend to dominate the debate both inside and outside the academic context, contributing to a fragmented scenario marked by hesitation and legitimization.

Within this broader dynamic, Italian HEIs are undergoing a particularly complex process of GenAI integration. On one side, there is enthusiasm for innovation and efficiency; on the other, concerns persist regarding academic integrity, transparency and privacy (Ciofalo et al., 2024; Farinosi & Melchior, 2025). However, Universities that articulate explicit, ethical, and transparent AI governance frameworks appear more likely to reinforce their institutional legitimacy within national and international academic ecosystems (Moorhouse et al., 2023).

Despite growing awareness, Italy ranks among the lowest EU countries in digital literacy and AI adoption (OECD, 2025). Eurostat (2025) also identifies a significant national lag in the use of generative AI tools for educational purposes compared to the European average. Given this scenario, Italian public universities represent valuable laboratories for observing how AI technologies are negotiated and framed in organizational activities, including communication.

Thus, the research aims to examine how Italian public universities are addressing the GenAI revolution within their institutional frameworks and communication practices.

This study draws on two theoretical frameworks, the institutionalization model (Mergel & Bretschneider 2013), to identify and classify the different stages and conditions of GenAI adoption across universities; the TOE model (Tornatzky et al., 1990) to explore environmental factors that shape adoption patterns, enabling a comprehensive interpretation of how Italian universities approach, integrate, and communicate AI.

Specifically, the study addresses three research questions:

1. Have Italian public universities developed policies, guidelines, or governance structures to regulate GenAI use?
2. How are these orientations reflected in their strategic communication strategies?
3. To what extent do university communication offices adopt GenAI tools in the creation of digital content?

Methodologically, the research consists of two different stages.

A comprehensive mapping of the websites of all 61 Italian public universities provides the first dataset, to identify the visibility of AI-related policies or guidelines, designated AI responsibles and communication initiatives. This mapping is followed by a content analysis of strategic plans, institutional guidelines, public statements, and official documents addressing the use of GenAI, including communication plans. Attention is placed on transparency concerning AI-generated communication contents and the strategic use of these synthetic systems.

Expected findings include the identification of Italy's fragmented yet evolving path in GenAI integration, marked by innovative practices, regulatory gaps, and uneven governance maturity. The study will also explore the impact of institutional alliances, as the Italian conference of rectors/OpenAI agreement, in strengthening legitimacy, trust, and public accountability within the landscape of the "new AI-driven" academia.

OSC05 Culture, Heritage and National Image

PP 0707 Cultural mega-events as a shield: How the Grand Egyptian museum shapes national image amidst global crisis

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In today's world of constant global tension, cultural mega-events have become more than just a way to make money or attract tourists. For developing nations, these events are now used as strategic tools to manage their international reputation during difficult times, such as the recovery from the pandemic and the ongoing instability caused by conflicts in Gaza for example. While Egypt has recently used highly produced events like the "Pharaohs' Golden Parade" to grab global headlines, the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) marks a major change in strategy. This paper studies how the GEM acts as a stable branding platform that has helped and keep on helping Egypt project an image of strength, historical consistency, and modern leadership, even when the surrounding region is volatile. This study adds to existing research by combining Anholt's (2007) "Nation Branding Hexagon" with a new focus on symbolic resilience. It asks a key question: How can a cultural project help a nation overcome the negative perceptions often caused by regional instability? The research examines how the GEM acts as a buffer, ensuring that when people think of Egypt, they focus on its cultural greatness rather than its proximity to global conflicts.

Methodology

This study uses a practical, multi-method approach to see how the event was planned and how people actually reacted to it. The data includes:

- Semi-structured Interviews (n = 9): Conducted with high-level decision-makers, including senior officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, strategic communication experts, and event creators. These interviews provide a detailed description of the internal motivations and the intended state-led narrative.
- Social Media Analysis: A stratified sampling of 3,000 multilingual posts on Instagram and Facebook. Utilizing thematic coding, the study categorizes responses into three primary categories:
  1. *Civic Pride (Domestic sentiment);*
  2. *Nation Branding (International traveler sentiment); and*
  3. *lace Branding (Global discourse on the country).*
- Media Analysis: An analysis of 50 international news outlets to track narrative shifts during the museum's inaugural month and how it was talked about and about the country.

Findings & Academic Debate

The results show that the GEM is a core part of Egypt Vision 2030 for tourism sector specifically. It successfully promoted for the newly renovated Giza area that has been turned into a modern cultural hub that competing with other major cities within Egypt and around the world. The study opens an important debate: Can a cultural event like the GEM opening truly transform a nation's long-term reputation? The findings show that because so many different groups were involved, including private companies, global experts, and local communities, the museum became a shared success rather than just a government project. This research shows that when a country uses its heritage to build civic pride, it creates a more authentic and resilient national brand. The GEM serves as a lesson for other nations on how to use cultural landmarks to move beyond traditional tourism and instead build a sense of collective confidence and global leadership.

OSC05 Culture, Heritage and National Image

PP 0708 Strategic organisational and intercultural communication: Community radio stations and social change in the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast

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This study examines how three community radio stations from URACCAN University—Rosita, Siuna, and Waspam—function as strategic communicative organisations. These stations operate as intercultural public relations laboratories (Grunig et al., 2007) capable of transforming structural issues into opportunities for dialogue, cohesion, and social change in the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua (Servaes, 2012). In a territory marked by land conflicts, educational inequalities, and healthcare fragility, these media outlets develop organisational strategies for relationship management, knowledge articulation, and the strengthening of culturally diverse citizenships. This is achieved through strategic interaction with stakeholders—indigenous and Afro-descendant communities—(Freeman & McVea, 2001) who participate directly and indirectly in organisational governance, agenda-setting, content production, and the construction of communicative processes oriented toward social change.

This research operationalises the two-way symmetrical model (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and stakeholder theory (Bourne, 2009; Freeman & McVea, 2001) within intercultural community organisations. In this scenario, community radio stations expand the scope of strategic organisational communication beyond corporate contexts into development-oriented settings (Guo, 2017; Wilkinson, 2017). Relationship management in these environments is both strategic and cultural, requiring linguistic, epistemological, and symbolic adaptation, thereby extending stakeholder theory toward organisational interculturality in community settings.

A mixed-methods approach and a multiple-case study design (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1998) were employed, focusing on three stations and three key issues: land conflicts, educational deficits, and weaknesses in the healthcare system. The study integrated a literature review; semi-structured interviews with staff, analysed using Atlas.ti; and participant observation of interactions between the audience and the station, in addition to a four-month cultural immersion program (Kawulich, 2005; Angrosino, 2012). Furthermore, a synchronic quantitative analysis (Rourke and Anderson, 2004) of the 2023 programming schedules was conducted, following Perona's (1996) model, to identify genres and content oriented toward social change. Data triangulation ensured the validity of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The results reveal that the stations broadcast a combined 352 hours, dedicating 23% of total airtime to strategic communication and public relations for social change. By station, Waspam allocates 35.9%, Siuna 21.4%, and Rosita 16.5%. This percentage constitutes a deliberate organisational strategy with measurable objectives. Qualitatively, the radio stations implement applied strategic communication by managing land conflicts through campaigns on communal rights and intercultural mediation, which have facilitated the recovery of encroached lands. In education, they produce bilingual content that strengthens intercultural access in alignment with the Regional Autonomous Education Subsystem (SEAR). In healthcare, they lead prevention campaigns using multilingual messaging that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitated coordination between traditional and Western medical practices. This research contributes to public relations and organisational communication theory by demonstrating that strategic models are transferable to community organisations in multicultural contexts, proposing a hybrid model that integrates strategic communication, interculturality, and community participation as agents of social change.

Keywords

Strategic communication, Stakeholders, community radio, indigenous-Afro-descendant, social change, two-way model, intercultural communication

OSC05 Culture, Heritage and National Image

PP 0709 Does more say more? Organizational heritage communication and the amount of historic information

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Through organizational heritage communication, organizations share their past to help stakeholders make sense of who the organizations are today and where they are headed. Companies, for instance, often emphasize family ownership across generations to highlight a foundation deeply rooted in tradition (Blombäck & Brunninge, 2013). A growing number of studies examines the effectiveness of organizational heritage communication. They typically draw from at least two contrasting theories. Based on signaling theory (Erdem & Swait, 1998), research found that heritage communication signals credibility and, consequently, benefits the organization's strategic goals (Pecot et al., 2018). Following construal level theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010), research showed that heritage communication increases psychological distance (i.e. makes the organization feel less close), which in turn leads to unfavorable effects (Scarpi, 2021). This implies that effects depend on competing underlying mechanisms.

Prior studies often operationalized heritage communication through logos or advertisements using indicators such as the founding year or organizational age. In practice, however, organizations not only share these numbers but also use storytelling to provide a richer narrative of their past (Pfannes et al., 2021). They *frame* their history in a way that best highlights their brand identity, core mission, and relevance to stakeholders. Yet, the effectiveness of increasing historic information about the organization, and the question which underlying mechanism may prevail when heritage framing is used, has remained widely unexplored. Our research therefore investigated both the main and indirect effects of the amount as well as the nature of historic information in organizational heritage communication on several relevant organizational perceptions (i.e., perceived heritage, perceived legitimacy, and perceived reputation).

We conducted a preregistered experiment in the Netherlands with a representative sample. Participants read an 'About us' text from either a fictional bank or steel company. The control condition contained only information about the organization's present, while the experimental conditions additionally included up to four heritage frames randomly (founding period, place of origin, founder, success). The second author (a historian) ensured all information was historically credible. Manipulation checks were also successful. We adapted existing Likert scales to measure our main variables on 7-point scales. The study was preregistered prior to data collection: https://osf.io/5byqn/?view_only=4c802069f057479abf86b6328aeb4bc2.

Our findings showed that increasing the amount of historic information through heritage framing positively impacted perceived heritage and perceived reputation. No such significantly effects were found on perceived legitimacy. We found that credibility increased with the amount of historic information and, in turn, positively affected the main variables, but only when at least three heritage frames were present. Increased information led to greater psychological distance and consequently lower scores on the main variables, independent of the number of heritage frames. Our findings, therefore, suggest that heritage communication enhances credibility only when a substantial amount of historic information is provided, while psychological distance consistently poses a risk that should be minimized. The founder frame emerged as the most effective heritage frame because it was the only frame that enhanced credibility perceptions without simultaneously increasing psychological distance. Organizations may use these insights to refine their heritage communication strategies.

OSC05 Culture, Heritage and National Image

PP 0710 How science information repertoires are related to university reputation

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The relationship between citizens and higher education is highly mediated. Most people will learn about science and universities through the media (Schäfer, 2011). However, little is known about how media consumption relates to public evaluations of universities and their societal value. This study addresses this gap by examining how science information repertoires are associated with reputation, understood as the evaluation of universities by the public (Vogler, 2020). Theoretically, the study builds on the concept of media repertoires, stable patterns of media use (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017), which have been shown to be related to evaluations of organizations (Schwaiger et al., 2020).

The study is based on a standardized online survey (n = 1,340) measuring university reputation and science information repertoires in Switzerland. We apply Eisenegger's (2005) three-dimensional concept of reputation, which is rooted in Habermas's three-world framework and, due to its level of abstraction, is applicable to different types of organizations. We apply the concept to universities using two items per dimension (scale 0–6), capturing evaluations of universities' research and teaching performance (functional dimension), their commitment to social standards and contribution to society (social dimension), and their emotional appeal and perceived uniqueness (expressive dimension). The study includes all

six universities in the German-speaking region of Switzerland. Each participant was randomly assigned two universities for evaluation. Respondents who indicated that they did not know a given university were excluded. The six reputation items per university were aggregated into a mean index, resulting in a total of 2,305 individual reputation assessments.

The reputation measures were combined with measures of information behavior. Participants reported the frequency of use (scale 0–6) of ten different channels for obtaining information about science, research, and higher education (e.g., newspapers, social media, television, radio, and university channels). We applied latent profile analysis (LPA) to identify five distinct science information repertoires, labeled *Heavy Users*, *Omnivores*, *Social Media & Online*, *Traditionalists*, and *Deprived*. Additionally, we included age, gender, education, and trust in science as covariates.

The results show that university reputation differs across science information repertoires. An ANOVA with post hoc tests indicates that reputation is significantly lower among the *Deprived* repertoire (M = 3.49) compared to all other groups. Reputation is highest among *Heavy Users* (M = 4.70), followed by *Omnivores* (M = 4.01), *Traditionalists* (M = 4.00), and the *Social Media & Online* repertoire (M = 3.83). Further analysis using linear regression shows that these differences between repertoires persist when covariates are included. Trust in science, gender (male), and age are positively related to reputation. Overall, the findings indicate that information behavior is an important factor shaping public evaluations of universities.

OSC05 Culture, Heritage and National Image

PP 0711 As feminists and public relations: A Proto-PR feminist model proposal

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This paper examines the intersections between feminist activism and the history of public relations by analysing feminist communicative practices developed prior to the institutionalisation of public relations (PR) as a professional field. While dominant PR historiography has largely focused on corporate, governmental and managerial trajectories, this study revisits feminist activism as a historically significant site of strategic communication practices oriented towards persuasion, visibility, mobilisation and public formation. Rather than retrospectively professionalising feminist actors, the paper approaches their communicative work as a proto-history of practices later formalised within PR.

Grounded in feminist communication theory and critical approaches to PR historiography, the study introduces the *Proto-PR Feminist Model* as an original analytical framework designed to examine how feminist activists organised communication to shape public discourse and collective action. The model integrates insights from feminist rhetoric, activist communication and critical public relations research, and is structured around six analytical dimensions: (1) framing processes, (2) publics and audiences, (3) narrative techniques, (4) authority and ethos, (5) calls to action, and (6) proto-PR functions, including agenda setting, counter-framing, opinion leadership, coalition building and media innovation. These dimensions function as interpretive categories that enable systematic and comparative analysis across historical and sociopolitical contexts, while remaining attentive to the conditions of exclusion and marginalisation in which feminist communication emerged.

Empirically, the study adopts a qualitative historical approach based on interpretative textual analysis. The corpus comprises speeches, pamphlets, investigative journalism and documentary materials produced by four feminist activists operating in different national contexts and periods: Ida B. Wells (United States), Emmeline Pankhurst (United Kingdom), Bertha Lutz (Brazil) and Maria Lamas (Portugal). These figures were selected because their communicative practices were sustained, publicly oriented and strategically deployed outside institutionalised PR structures, and because they exemplify distinct modes of feminist persuasion, including investigative, militant, diplomatic and documentary forms.

The comparative application of the Proto-PR Feminist Model reveals consistent patterns across cases. Wells employed investigative journalism and statistical evidence to reframe lynching as a national moral crisis and to construct counter-publics around racial justice. Pankhurst used spectacle, autobiographical narrative and militant rhetoric to generate visibility and mobilise collective action for suffrage. Lutz combined scientific authority and international advocacy to legitimise women's citizenship claims within institutional arenas. Lamas mobilised ethnographic testimony and documentary photography to expose structural gendered exploitation and to create empathy-based national audiences. Across cases, feminist activists engaged in deliberate framing, audience construction, narrative authority and calls to action that resonate with communicative functions later associated with public relations.

By foregrounding the analytical contribution of the Proto-PR Feminist Model, the paper expands PR historiography in two ways. First, it offers a transferable framework for examining strategic communication practices developed in non-institutional and activist contexts. Second, it challenges corporate-centred and androcentric accounts of PR history by demonstrating that key communicative functions emerged within feminist struggles for social transformation. The study thus contributes to a more inclusive and critical understanding of the historical development of public relations and strategic communication.

Keywords

feminist activism; public relations history; proto-PR feminist model; strategic communication practices; activist PR

OSC06 Strategic Communication in Platformed and Algorithmic Environments

PP 0791 Beyond engagement metrics in strategic communication: Methodological innovations for analyzing algorithmic environments

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As organizations increasingly operate within deeply mediatized digital environments (Couldry & Hepp, 2017), strategic communication is shaped not only by organizational intent but by algorithmic systems that structure visibility, emotional resonance, and contextual meaning. While organizations deploy a wide range of digital tools to create, monitor communication and evaluate performance, these instruments largely focus on observable content and post-hoc engagement metrics. This presentation argues that, despite this abundance of tools, organizations lack a coherent framework for exploring, analyzing, and understanding the digital environment itself—particularly the role of algorithms as infrastructural gatekeepers (Gillespie, 2014). Existing research has extensively examined digital strategies, platform use, and audience engagement. However, dominant approaches often remain in a state of methodological "stasis," prioritizing measurement over interpretation (Macnamara, 2018). Algorithms are frequently treated as background conditions rather than as dynamic actors that actively shape how organizational messages are circulated, clustered, amplified, or suppressed (Esposito, 2022), a perspective informed by relational approaches to communication and organizing (Kuhn, Ashcraft & Cooren, 2017). According to Bonini and Treré (2024), algorithms exercise power by embedding communication within broader meta-narratives and affective regimes that escape direct organizational control. In line with organizational communication research highlighting interpretive challenges in digital contexts (Locatelli & Lovari, 2021), this opacity creates a strategic risk: without understanding how automated systems shape communicative contexts, organizations struggle to distinguish between what is situational, what is silently omnipresent, thus ambient, and what is algorithmically produced. This study addresses this gap through a two-step research design. First, it conducts a critical review of a purposively selected corpus of peer-reviewed studies and policy and industry reports on algorithms, platform governance, and digital environment analysis. The review draws on key journals in strategic communication, media studies, and organization research, alongside reports from regulatory bodies and platform accountability initiatives, with a focus on publications from 2015 to 2024. Inclusion criteria required that studies explicitly examine algorithmic visibility, recommendation systems, or digital monitoring tools. A recurring limitation emerges from the review: despite widespread recognition of algorithmic influence, few studies offer concrete methods for empirically capturing these dynamics in action—a gap that the subsequent section of this presentation explores. Second, the presentation introduces analytical honeypotting as a methodological response. Adapted from cybersecurity and computational research, honeypotting involves simulating specific user behaviors to examine how recommendation systems categorize, prioritize, and associate content—without generating artificial engagement. This approach enables the observation of ambient narratives and emotional patterns that circulate independently of organizational actors. The method is illustrated through a case study on digital nostalgia, an emotionally charged and strategically mobilized theme in organizational storytelling. The analysis shows how nostalgic narratives are algorithmically clustered and embedded within broader meta-narratives that shape reception conditions before organizational messages are encountered. By combining a structured literature review with methodological innovation, this presentation advances understanding of algorithmically mediated communication and offers a rigorous framework for analyzing digital environments with both academic, organizational, and societal relevance.

OSC06 Strategic Communication in Platformed and Algorithmic Environments

PP 0792 Strategic communication, AI, and public value: Ethnographic insights into organizational paths and challenges of a municipal chatbot

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In a context of growing social uncertainty and an intensifying public debate on artificial intelligence, public organizations are required to rethink their communicative role in relation to the production of public value (Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019) and the management of citizens' expectations toward digital technologies, tracing new paths, fostering meaningful connections, and orienting possible futures. Within this scenario, chatbots adopted by local administrations represent a privileged empirical field for observing how organizational communication is constructed, governed, and interpreted in practice (Lovari, Ducci, 2022). This paper analyzes the case of "Rimini Chatbot", a rule-based conversational system implemented by the Municipality of Rimini in Italy with the aim of supporting citizens in accessing digital public services (Larsen-Følstad, 2024).

The study is grounded in an organizational ethnography approach, based on seven months of participant observation conducted at the Municipality of Rimini. During this period, the everyday practices of public communicators, operational meetings, and coordination moments with the technology provider were observed, with particular attention to content update processes, the definition of tone of voice, and the conscious management of the system's limitations and of the

objectives of citizen-centered public communication. This ethnographic core is complemented by the results of a questionnaire administered to citizens through the chatbot itself and by an analysis of chatbot logs, which make it possible to relate the observed organizational practices to users' actual uses and perceptions.

From a theoretical perspective, the paper is situated within the field of organizational and strategic communication (Latour, 2002) and interprets the chatbot as a socio-material infrastructure (Orlikowski, 2007) through which forms of algorithmic bureaucracy materialize (Vogl, Seidelin, Ganesh, & Bright, 2020), understood as the partial automation of communicative and informational procedures traditionally carried out by human operators. From this perspective, the chatbot contributes to shaping communicative pathways, reconfiguring connections between the organization, the technology provider, and citizens, and redefining the conditions under which public communication produces public value in terms of accessibility, transparency, and information standardization.

The findings show that, from an organizational standpoint, public communicators and the technology provider implement careful and coherent management practices aimed at ensuring informational reliability, regulatory compliance, and the reduction of communicative risk. However, questionnaire data reveal only partial appreciation on the part of responding citizens. The analysis suggests that this gap does not stem from technical or communicative shortcomings, but rather from a tension between the logic of public value and users' expectations, which are often oriented toward generative, dialogic, and personalized models of artificial intelligence.

The case of the Rimini Chatbot thus enables a critical reflection on the possible future scenarios of automated public communication, showing how the legitimacy of algorithmic bureaucracy depends not solely on system efficiency, but on organizations' ability to govern sociomaterial expectations and to clearly communicate the boundaries of automation.

The main limitation of this study is that it focuses on a single Italian case; future research could address this issue by conducting comparative analyses across multiple cases at the European level.

OSC06 Strategic Communication in Platformed and Algorithmic Environments

PP 0793 From distance to closeness: How temporal and emotional proximity influence non-profit social media communication

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The aim of this paper is to advance understanding of how and why non-profit organizations use social media for external communication by moving beyond both broad sector-level generalizations and micro-level studies on single organizations and platforms. Drawing on a manually coded dataset of 1,694 posts across Instagram, Facebook, and X/Twitter, we conduct a cross-platform and cross-organization comparison of two major Swedish fundraising organizations: the Swedish Red Cross and the Swedish Childhood Cancer Fund. Unlike prior research that typically focuses on a single platform or treats social media as a homogeneous technology (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Lam & Nie, 2020), this study provides a fine-grained analysis of what is communicated, who is given voice, and who is addressed in social media posts.

Theoretically, we apply the concept of stakeholder closeness and distance (Gray et al., 2006) to understand observed differences in communication practices, demonstrating that variations are shaped not only by platform-specific affordances but also by the temporal and emotional closeness/distance between causes and stakeholders. Our findings reveal that while both organizations rely on Instagram and Facebook for visually rich storytelling, they differ markedly in narrative style and audience engagement: the Red Cross adopts an organization-centric approach emphasizing accountability and evidence of action, whereas the Childhood Cancer Fund employs a more inclusive strategy centered on beneficiaries and interactive campaigns. Twitter, in contrast, emerges as a distinct space for advocacy and direct interaction with niche communities.

By refining existing conceptual categories and introducing closeness as an explanatory lens, this study contributes to theory development and offers insights for non-profits. We argue that understanding platform-specific dynamics and stakeholder relationships is critical for designing effective communication, and we call for further comparative research across causes and contexts.

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OSC06 Strategic Communication in Platformed and Algorithmic Environments

PP 0794 How misinformation by organizations affects trust: The role of intentions and consequences

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Misinformation erodes public trust in organizations. Although organizations are often victims of misinformation, they can also be prominent sources of misinformation. Tobacco and oil companies have been accused of deceiving the public through coordinated disinformation campaigns. Other organizations may mislead their stakeholders inadvertently. A customer service chatbot of Air Canada, e.g., provided customers with false refund information.

Different forms of misinformation by organizations, varying in intent and consequences, likely have different repercussions for trust in organizations. In this study, we complement Situational Crisis Communication Theory with Correspondent Inference Theory (CIT), a type of attribution theory which postulates that evaluations of an actor hinge primarily on intentions and consequences of an action – two concepts prominent in misinformation debates. We therefore consider the effects of both the intentional spread (i.e., disinformation) and unintentional spread (i.e., misinformation) of false information by organizations on trust. Apart from intentions, the severity of the negative consequences also likely also affects trust – as evidenced in crisis communication research. Specifically, we expect that organizational disinformation (vs. misinformation) and severe (vs. limited) consequences lead to less trust in the organization.

Notably, little is known about whether intentions or consequences of misinformation are more decisive in shaping people's evaluations of organizations. Within CIT the relative influence of intentions and consequences indeed remains unclear. This study therefore disentangles their effects on trust in an organization (for the preregistered hypotheses, see: https://edu.nl/prejk).

Using a 3 (type of information: disinformation vs. misinformation vs. control) by 2 (type of consequences: severe vs. limited) between-subjects experiment, we exposed respondents (N = 603) to a news article about a fictitious organization that reportedly misled their customers either intentionally or unintentionally, which led to severe or limited negative consequences.

Two-way ANOVAs revealed significant main effects of type of information and type of consequences on perceived trust, integrity, benevolence, competence, and customer intent. Overall, disinformation led to more negative evaluations compared to misinformation, which also led to more negative evaluations compared to the control condition. Severe (vs. limited) negative consequences also led to more negative evaluations. Contrary to our expectations, no significant interactions between intentions and consequences were found.

We conclude that the intentions and consequences of organizational misinformation additively yet independently erode trust in the organization. Our study is the first to integrate CIT with debates on (organizational) misinformation and proves that CIT is valuable for explaining how organizational misinformation affects trust in organizations. In doing so, we contribute to the literature in three ways. First, while misinformation studies focus on the persuasiveness of misinformation and on its corrections, our organizational focus underscores the relevance of examining the reputational repercussions of misinformation for organizations. Second, for studies on the relation between organizations and misinformation, our findings show that perceptions of an organization are not only negatively affected when they are the victim of misinformation, but also when they are the source. Third, we add to the literature on corporate deception and trust, by showing that next to intentional deceit even unintentionally misinforming stakeholders undermines trust in organizations.

OSC06 Strategic Communication in Platformed and Algorithmic Environments

PP 0795 Who is responsible for the digital society? Public expectations of Corporate Digital Responsibility

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The digital transformation in society introduces unique organizational responsibilities such as Artificial Intelligence, datafication, and surveillance that go beyond traditional Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks. In response, Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR) has emerged as an extension of CSR "which takes into account the ethical opportunities and challenges of digitalization" (Herden et al., 2021, p. 7). Yet, organisations are under increasing scrutiny to act digitally responsible (Schwinges et al., 2023), which is important to gain and maintain competitive advantages in an era of organizational distrust (European Communication Monitor, 2025).

Despite growing attention in other disciplines that have led to early measurements and managerial approaches to CDR (Merbecks, 2024; Yang et al., 2025), these approaches are rarely grounded in communication theory or help us to empirically support CDR communication frameworks (Wang & Schwinges, 2025). There is a clear knowledge gap about how citizens assign digital responsibilities to companies relative to other social actors like the government or news media (RQ1); if and how they differentiate expectations towards companies across ESG domains (RQ2); or how digital competencies, and

environmental and social consciousness predict these accountability demands, and how institutional trust moderates these associations (RQ3).

To address these questions, we conducted a pre-registered survey with a representative sample of citizens in the Netherlands (n = 2196; 50.5% female, balanced for age and education). Based on Herden et al. (2021), we developed a scale measuring CDR along three dimensions: *environmental CDR* as the responsibility to reduce the negative impact of digital technologies (Covucci et al., 2024), *social CDR* as company's responsibility to minimize harm and promote well-being (Yang et al., 2025), and, *governance CDR* as companies dealing with the accountability of technology (Trier et al., 2023; Van Der Merwe & Al Achkar, 2022). In addition, we measured responsibility attributions towards environmental, social, and governance CDR relative to other social actors and other potential predictors of CDR.

Results show that citizens attribute greater digital responsibility to organisations compared to other societal institutions across all three ESG domains, aligning with the increasing visibility of companies as key agents in the digital society. Public perceptions of CDR broadly align with the ESG framework; yet we find that issues like privacy and personal rights are interpreted as governance-oriented rather than social CDR, reflecting a growing emphasis on oversight and accountability. Environmental and social consciousness, as well as digital competencies, are strong predictors of CDR. Corporate trust moderates these associations, demonstrating how epistemic distrust challenges the role that companies can play in the responsible digital transformation.

We contribute to prior research on CDR by providing (1) a conceptual, communication-science based integration of CDR with stakeholder theory and digital ethics; (2) a validated methodological measurement of a CDR along the ESG framework; (3) an empirical mapping of public expectations and testing of their predictors; and lastly, (4) we offer practical guidance for organizations to align CDR communication with stakeholder expectations.

OSC07 Internal Communication and Institutional Change

PP 0899 Organizational purpose communication showing the path: How mid-level managers make meanings amid shifting stakeholder expectations

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Contemporary business practices have contributed to an increasingly unstable global context, where organizational actions pose significant risks to climate, ecosystems, societies, and human well-being (Ehrnström-Fuentes et al., 2025). In response, governments, NGOs, citizens, researchers and businesses have intensified scrutiny of corporate legitimacy and the reasoning behind organizational existence, often articulated through the concept of organizational purpose. Purpose is presented as a means to align business operations with societal good (Henderson, 2024), thus seeking to legitimize business operations through ethical grounds.

Despite extensive examination of organizational purpose across multiple disciplines (e.g. management and organizational studies, organizational psychology, leadership, CSR, business ethics, and corporate law), the organizational communication perspective remains underexplored with just few exceptions (e.g., Kuhn, 2024). This omission is critical because purpose communication can operate as a strategic discourse that legitimizes authority and managerial control, albeit frequently framed as social responsibility. From a communication perspective, purpose is not merely a declarative statement but an ongoing process of meaning-making: communication constitutes knowledge, social structures, and organizational realities (Craig, 1999). Therefore, a critical analysis of this discourse is essential, given the societal power of corporations and the far-reaching impact of their communicative practices on global well-being. Building on this gap, this ongoing study examines how organizational purpose, as a social construct, is continuously framed, negotiated, and enacted through communication. Specifically, we explore how social sustainability and the societal acceptance of business organizations are constructed internally and externally through purpose communication.

Employing a Straussian Grounded Theory approach (Strauss, 1987), we analyze how mid-level managers in a large Nordic industrial manufacturing company interpret and make meanings of organizational purpose, stakeholder expectations, and a shifting operational environment. Given the methodological design, the precise research questions will evolve as the study progresses. Our dataset consists of 20 interviews with mid-level managers, which have been initially coded. Further analysis of these interviews and codes, along with an in-depth literature review, is currently underway.

By the time of the European Communication Conference, we will present refined results, but the tentative findings suggest that for the mid-level managers organizational purpose communication operates as a guiding strategic narrative framing organizational transformation, as a reconciliatory force between societal expectations and organizational imperatives, and as a source of intra-organizational tensions. Our study contributes to understanding how organizations navigate complex and shifting societal expectations and operational environments through communicative practices of purpose.

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OSC07 Internal Communication and Institutional Change

PP 0900 Mapping internal communication about organizational missions and work meanings in environmental NGOs

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Internal communication plays a central role in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) because it constitutes organizational membership (Winkler & Schoeneborn, 2020), enhances work meaningfulness (Marchiori & Buzzanell, 2017), and aligns stakeholder expectations (Shumate & O'Connor, 2010). Creating shared work meanings and a clear mission is crucial for these organizations because these communication processes enhance employee engagement and motivation despite often limited resources and low wages (Berlan, 2018). The Instigatory Theory of NGO Communication (ITNC) defines internal relations as communication activities that create shared vision and legitimacy on the strategic level and participation, co-creation, and reproduction on the operational level (Oliveira, 2019). Despite this elaborate theoretical approach, few studies explore internal communication practices of NGOs and reflect on the ITNC model. Thus, this study aims to map internal communication practices that create paths for NGOs by constructing work meanings, reinterpreting organizational mission, and enhancing work meaningfulness. We ask: How do employees of NGOs communicate about meaningful work and organizational mission internally?

The thematic content analysis of n = 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with employees of five Hungarian environmental NGOs uncovers internal communication tools, channels, and practices. The sample strives for diversity and includes NGOs of various sizes, institutional forms, and backgrounds working in different areas of environmental protection ranging from water pollution to youth education and climate activism.

The results show that participating NGO employees feel a need to reflect on shared work meanings and discuss the organizational mission; however, these initiatives are sporadic and not integrated in daily operations. The results reflect on the differing levels of professionalism, building on the concept of nonprofit marketization (Sandberg et al., 2020), and show that as NGOs grow, their internal communication becomes more structured, and shared meaning-making of work becomes strategically planned. The study enriches the ITNC framework by mapping communicative ways of shared meaning-making in NGOs. From a practical point of view, the study provides professionals and leaders communicative ways for creating shared work meanings and enhancing work meaningfulness to successfully retain employees and keep NGOs on their strategic paths.

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OSC07 Internal Communication and Institutional Change

PP 0901 Bringing the CALM to organizational change: A communicative alignment and legitimacy model for co-created change narratives

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Organizational change research increasingly recognizes that transformation is not only a structural or strategic endeavor but a fundamentally communicative process through which meaning, legitimacy, and action are continuously negotiated. Building on this communicative turn, and especially on Lewis's Stakeholder Communication Model of Change (2007), this conceptual paper proposes the Communicative Alignment and Legitimacy Model (CALM) as a refinement that centers communication as the generative infrastructure of change rather than a downstream implementation tool.

CALM responds to two key limitations in existing models: first, the tendency to treat communication as a set of discrete strategies chosen by managers, and second, the under-specification of how internal legitimacy, alignment, and shared narratives actually emerge over time. Drawing on scholarship in strategic communication, sensemaking/sensegiving, and organizational change, as well as empirical insights from sustainability transitions in the energy sector, the model reconceptualizes change as a layered communicative system.

The model unfolds across three interconnected layers. Layer 1 identifies four core communicative processes: change legitimacy, sensemaking/sensegiving, communication, and co-creation as foundational conditions that make change meaningful, believable, and participatory. Layer 2 describes emergent relational conditions like change alignment, organizational change narrative, stakeholder dialogue, and shared purpose that develop when these processes interact, creating a social infrastructure for collective orientation and ownership. Layer 3 specifies four strategic communicative mechanisms. i.e. institutional efficacy, co-orientation, framing the change, and framing the organization through which organizations guide, stabilize, and recalibrate alignment and legitimacy in practice.

Together, these layers culminate in a co-created change narrative: a shared, evolving story of why change matters, what it entails, and who the organization is becoming. CALM is intentionally idealized, offering both a theoretical framework and a diagnostic lens for examining where change communication breaks down—for example, when legitimacy is fragile, dialogue is absent, or framing diverges from lived experience. The paper outlines CALM's contributions to refining SCMC, advancing stakeholder-centric strategic communication, and enriching processual understandings of organizational change, and suggests avenues for empirical research on legitimacy formation, narrative development, and participatory communication in complex change contexts such as sustainability transitions.

OSC07 Internal Communication and Institutional Change

PP 0902 Digitalization pathways and their impact on organizational communication in local authorities: A case study of digital workplace practices in an Italian municipality

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In a context of global uncertainty, public administrations are facing a digital transition that impacts both services and governance models (Lovari&Ducci, 2022). The post-pandemic acceleration in digital media adoption (Faccioli et al., 2020; Boccia Artieri, 2023) has established public communication as a strategic pillar for institutional trust (Oliveira&Gonçalves, 2023) and the safeguarding of democracy (OECD, 2021, 2024). In today's hybrid and convergent media ecosystem (Jenkins, 2006), traditional communication methods coexist with digital tools and Artificial Intelligence (Desouza et al., 2020). This evolution is ambivalent: while digital environments can foster participation, transparency, and accountability (Canel&Luoma-aho, 2019; Ducci et al., 2021), they also expose institutions to risks such as polarization and information disorder, presenting new challenges for public sector communication (Bessières, 2024).

To be strategically managed rather than merely endured, the digital transition requires technology adoption to be virtuously integrated with new organizational practices and human capital management (Macnamara, 2024). In internal communication, technology can stimulate motivation and participation (Invernizzi, 2000; Mazzei, 2018; Beniušis, 2023), creating public value (Twizeyimana&Andersson, 2019) by nurturing relational and emotional dimensions. By adopting a sociomaterial perspective (Orlikowski, 2007; Leonardi et al., 2012), it is possible to analyze how the social/human element and technological tools are inseparable, moving beyond the distinction between technology, work, and organization (Plesner&Husted, 2022).

Following this approach, a study was conducted in Italy regarding the adoption of a digital workplace in the Municipality of Santarcangelo di Romagna - a significant example of a small municipality receiving European funding via the National-Recovery-and-Resilience-Plan (PNRR). The research aimed to monitor the adoption of this tool within the organization to identify the potential creation of public value through the analysis of internal communication practices and the role of communication professionals.

The research was carried out between March 2024 and October 2025 using a mixed-methods approach (Krippendorff, 2018) and was divided into two phases. In the first phase (March-September 2024), which was quantitative, the digital architecture of the platform was analyzed by monitoring employee activity and usage (quantity and types of content classified inductively; engagement levels). In the second phase (January- October 2025), based on the initial results, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the provider and ten key employees involved in the digital transition, supplemented by focus groups with employees across various organizational levels.

The results show a generally positive reception of the digital workplace among employees, who perceive it as a simple tool that facilitates collaboration and information exchange. While the implementation process led by the communication staff was largely viewed positively, significant critical issues remain: the adoption of the tool is not uniform across departments, and those with less digital literacy face usage difficulties. While workplace functions related to work tasks are appreciated, more relational spaces remain underutilized or undervalued. Specific, profile-based training is needed to complete the digital transition.

Although this study has limitations inherent to a single case study, it highlights useful reflections for formulating research hypotheses for the analysis of other small municipalities within the Italian and international contexts.

OSC07 Internal Communication and Institutional Change

PP 0903 Communication offices of Portuguese central hospitals: Organizational additions and challenges in strategic communication

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This study aims to understand strategic and organizational communication in Portuguese central hospitals. Hospital Communication and Health Communication are topics that have been growing in interest within academia and gained even more strength with the pressures imposed by the pandemic on health institutions. Hospitals had to reinvent themselves and alarms sounded about the need for good communication.

We established as the main focus of this study, know how communication in these large hospital centers constitutes an organizational added value and listen, through the eyes of those responsible, what are the main challenges they face.

As an object of study, we chose 5 large hospital structures: São João Hospital and University Center, Santo António Hospital and University Center, both in the city of Porto, Coimbra Hospital and University Center, Central Lisbon Hospital and University Center and North Lisbon Hospital and University Center. Using qualitative case study methodology, information was collected through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, carried out via video call to representatives of the Communication Offices of these hospitals. Information processing follows the content analysis method.

The fact that there are no known studies in Portugal on this particular topic, made the construction of this one truly interesting. In this study we were able to characterize these communication consultancies in terms of the nomenclature adopted and the years of existence. We were allowed to learn about the human resources allocated to each of them, their specific functions, their training, and also the type of professional relationship with the institution. At the same time, we drew important conclusions about the practices of communication offices, the position of communication in the organization, and the dominant strategic lines of internal and external communication. Our conclusions regarding the main challenges and added value of their strategic communication were divided into organizational gains, challenges faced, and factors that enhance the performance of Communication Offices.

Keywords

health communication, strategic and organizational communication, hospital communication, communication offices

OSC08 Activism, Identity and Counterpublics

PP 1005 From service-driven visibility to collective organisation? A two-wave qualitative longitudinal study of labour activism on TikTok in Italy (2023–2026)

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This paper presents a two-wave qualitative longitudinal study of labour-related communication and digital activism on TikTok in Italy, with a specific focus on the opportunities and constraints faced by trade unions in platform-mediated environments. The study is situated within broader debates on platform society and political participation (Fenton & Barassi, 2011; Murru & Vicari, 2021), the mobilising potential of social media for labour movements (Panagiotopoulos & Barnett, 2015; Ford & Sinpeng, 2022; Hau, 2022), and the growing prominence of influencer and microcelebrity practices in public engagement with social issues (Abidin, 2018; Alperstein & Alperstein, 2021; Riedl et al., 2021; Murru et al., 2024). Particular attention is paid to TikTok as a platform characterised by multimodality and imitation-based practices, whose affordances

foster highly individualised and visibility-driven forms of participation, posing both opportunities and challenges for collective actors (Le Compte & Klug, 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2022).

The first wave of the research (February 2023–June 2024) adopted a qualitative mixed-methods design combining systematic platform mapping with semi-structured interviews. A keyword-based exploration of TikTok led to the identification of 680 Italian profiles discussing labour-related topics. The last 30 videos published by each profile were collected, resulting in a corpus of 2,852 videos from 225 active profiles. In parallel, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with communication officers and leaders from confederal and non-confederal trade unions at national and territorial levels.

The platform analysis revealed a heterogeneous but predominantly service-driven ecosystem of labour-related visibility. The most active and visible profiles were mainly labour professionals — such as labour lawyers and employment consultants — who combined rights advocacy with professional self-promotion. Trade union accounts were present but marginal in terms of visibility and engagement.

The interview analysis allowed for a systematic identification of barriers and enablers shaping trade unions' engagement with TikTok. Key barriers included organisational unawareness and limited internal motivation to invest in social media communication, a strong normative resistance to personalisation and leadership-centred visibility, and the perceived incompatibility between TikTok's informal, entertainment-oriented culture and the complexity or seriousness of union issues. Collective mobilisation was perceived as difficult to achieve in highly individualised platform environments.

At the same time, several enablers emerged. Interviewees consistently identified service-oriented communication — particularly related to fiscal benefits, social security, and welfare — as the most effective and legitimate form of union presence on TikTok. Limited but significant forms of personalisation, especially through recognised leaders or experts, were acknowledged as algorithmically effective when embedded within organisational channels. Furthermore, bottom-up experiments involving workers' own profiles and performative content were cited, pointing to a potential for worker involvement in communicative practices

The second wave of the study (2025–2026), currently underway, replicates both the platform analysis and the qualitative interview component using comparable procedures and a partially replicated interview guide. The research aims to assess persistence and change in the Italian TikTok labour ecosystem. The follow-up focuses on whether the service-driven configuration observed in the first wave represents a stable structural pattern, or whether new forms of organisational learning, personalisation, and collective mobilisation are emerging over time.

OSC08 Activism, Identity and Counterpublics

PP 1006 Digital influencers with disabilities in strategic communication: A systematic literature review

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As principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) gain prominence across organisational agendas, strategic communication increasingly engages with social actors who mediate values, visibility, and legitimacy within complex media environments. Among these actors, digital influencers (DIs) with disabilities have emerged as visible participants in organisational communication practices, particularly on social media platforms. While prior research recognises their potential to challenge ableist representations and foster inclusion, scholarship on this topic remains dispersed across disciplinary fields, with limited consolidation within organisational and strategic communication research.

This study presents a systematic literature review examining how DIs with disabilities have been conceptualised and analysed in academic research, with particular attention to their relationship with strategic communication. Three research questions guided the review: RQ1) How have DIs with disabilities been defined, approached, and discussed in academic research, particularly in digital media contexts? RQ2) Which theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and contexts underpin research on DIs with disabilities in relation to organisational and strategic communication practices? RQ3) What dominant debates, emerging trends, and persistent gaps characterise this body of literature? To the authors' knowledge, this review represents one of the first systematic efforts to synthesise research at the intersection of disability and digital influence, mapping how and to what extent these actors are examined within organisational and strategic communication contexts.

Following PRISMA guidelines, searches were conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2008, when the term "digital influencer" first appeared in academic literature, and the second quarter of 2025. Articles written in English, Portuguese, or Spanish were included. The search strategy combined keywords related to digital influencers and disability, applied to abstracts and author-provided keywords. The initial search yielded 152 records. After duplicate removal and independent eligibility screening by three reviewers, 63 articles were retained for analysis. Of these, only nine studies directly addressed DIs with disabilities in relation to organisational or strategic communication practices.

The analysis identifies three overarching patterns. First, research on influencers with disabilities is predominantly grounded in marketing, advertising, and consumer behaviour perspectives, prioritising outcomes such as brand perception, purchase

intention, and audience responses. Second, disability is frequently treated as a representational category rather than as a structural and socio-political dimension shaping communicative processes, power relations, and access. Third, only a small subset of studies engages with broader strategic communication concerns, including organisational responsibility, ethical governance, and sustained inclusion strategies.

Taken together, these findings indicate that prevailing research paths privilege short-term instrumental effects over systemic communicative implications. This imbalance constrains understanding of how strategic communication contributes to durable organisational trajectories, meaningful engagement with historically marginalised communities, and credible communicative futures.

This review contributes to organisational and strategic communication scholarship by mapping an emerging yet fragmented field and outlining directions for future research that foreground disability as a central analytical lens. It underscores the need for interdisciplinary and critical approaches addressing how communicative choices shape organisational legitimacy, social participation, and inclusive communicative futures in times of societal transformation.

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PP 1007 Illuminating affective belonging: Critical digital ethnography and the study of passionate publics in public relations

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Contemporary public relations scholarship has increasingly questioned rationalist, instrumental, and campaign-centred models of publics, highlighting their limitations in communication environments shaped by affect, relational intensity, and digitally mediated continuity (Edwards, 2018; Pieczka, 2019). Yet methodological tools capable of empirically engaging with publics organised around care, vulnerability, and affective belonging remain underdeveloped. This paper advances *critical digital ethnography* as a methodological orientation for studying such formations, arguing that affective publics require sustained, reflexive, and ethically attuned forms of inquiry.

Empirically, the paper draws on a longitudinal digital ethnography conducted between 2021 and 2025 within a contemporary spiritual communication ecosystem centred on the monthly "Energy Updates" produced by Lee Harris. The corpus comprises two interrelated components. First, 39 long-form YouTube videos were observed in full, amounting to over 20 hours of immersive viewing. These videos constitute a recurring communicative ritual through which themes of care, vulnerability, collective uncertainty, and existential orientation are articulated over time. Second, a dataset of 500 Instagram posts published between October 2021 and November 2025 was analysed, alongside 254 audience comments extracted from a curated subset of posts. Instagram data were used to contextualise patterns of engagement, thematic emphasis, and temporal distribution, while comments were analysed qualitatively as interactional sites of affective disclosure, recognition, and reciprocal care. The case is approached as a demonstrative site through which broader methodological and conceptual issues in public relations research are examined, rather than as an exceptional or marginal phenomenon.

Rather than treating platform data as indicators of effectiveness or persuasion, the study approaches videos, posts, and comments as ethnographic traces of lived public experience. Quantitative descriptors (such as post frequency, engagement distributions, and category prevalence) are mobilised to situate scale and rhythm, while interpretive analysis foregrounds repetition, anticipation, and relational continuity as key mechanisms of public formation.

Conceptually, the paper engages with affect theory (Ahmed, 2004; Massumi, 1992) and recent work on *passionate publics* (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2025) to argue that belonging, desire, and trust operate as infrastructural forces sustaining publics over time. Publics are conceptualised not as episodic or issue-driven collectivities, but as relational formations organised through shared temporal horizons, affective witnessing, and ethical presence. Desire is understood as a connective and productive force that enables endurance rather than as a transient motivational impulse (Kozinets, Patterson, & Ashman, 2017).

Methodologically, the paper reframes digital ethnography as an ethics of affective listening, emphasising longitudinal immersion, reflexive positionality, and ethical attunement to vulnerability (Pink et al., 2016; Fassin & Harcourt, 2019). It demonstrates how care-oriented and spiritual communication can be analysed critically without romanticisation or exterior dismissal. In doing so, the paper speaks directly to debates in organizational and strategic communication concerning how publics are conceptualised, engaged, and ethically interpreted beyond instrumental and campaign-centred logics.

The paper contributes to public relations research by challenging instrumental models of publics, offering a transferable methodological framework for studying care-oriented publics across domains such as wellness, activism, and promotional culture, and expanding the discipline's capacity to engage empirically with affective belonging as a central dimension of contemporary public formation.

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PP 1008 Agents of change

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Sustainable companies have long been recognized for attracting and retaining employees, thereby gaining a competitive advantage. Greening and Turban (2000) show that positive corporate social performance (CSP) increases organizational attractiveness to potential employees, and Backhaus, Stone, and Heiner (2002) identify environmental performance as a particularly influential CSP dimension. While this relationship is well established, a critical gap remains in understanding how employee engagement influences long-term retention. Given the challenges in directly measuring the extent to which employees drive organizational change, it may be more insightful to examine how sustainability commitments affect workforce stability and how companies integrate sustainable or circular practices in response to employee expectations. Accordingly, this study explores: *To what extent does corporate commitment to social responsibility and circular practices influence employee advocacy and enhance organizational legitimacy?*

As traditional sources of competitive advantage diminish, workforce calibre has become pivotal for sustaining success(P-feffer, 1994; Snell et al., 1999). A skilled and motivated workforce supports innovation and competitive advantage (Teece, 1998), and investments in well-being, fair compensation, and career development improve job satisfaction, retention, and performance(Qawasmeh et al., 2022). Aligning corporate culture with sustainability initiatives further strengthens management maturity and business outcomes(Fok et al., 2021). Beyond formal roles, employees contribute through advocacy voluntary behaviour in which they promote or defend organizational values and initiatives (Men, 2014). This organizational citizenship behaviour is not explicitly required or directly rewarded(Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Tsarenko et al., 2018; Walden & Kingsley Westerman, 2018) and has been linked to reputation and commitment(Walden & Kingsley Westerman, 2018; Yeh, 2014), yet remains underexplored in sustainability and circular economy contexts. From an organizational and strategic communication perspective, employee advocacy functions as a key mechanism through which sustainability meanings are interpreted, shared, and amplified to internal and external stakeholders, shaping legitimacy.

Employee perceptions often diverge from corporate narratives. PLAY-a white paper research reports that 77% of employees expect greater transparency, yet only 14% perceive sustainability initiatives as consistently impactful or genuine (9% among general employees versus 34% among business leaders). Prior research shows that CSR authenticity perceptions influence emotional commitment (Kim & Lee, 2022), and scepticism weakens pro-environmental behaviour(Bhattacharya et al., 2023) . Building on these insights, we propose a model in which corporate sustainability initiatives drive employee advocacy, enhancing organizational legitimacy, with employees' trust in CE innovations as a moderator and information availability on CE innovations as a control variable.

We use a survey-based design (Dillman et al., 2014) targeting employees in waste management, manufacturing, architecture, social sciences, innovation management, and standardization. Participants are drawn from Horizon 2020 REINCARNATE organizations using purposive sampling(Patton, 2014), spanning Germany, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the Netherlands as well as employees worldwide to capture cross-cultural variation in CSR and CE implementation.

Keywords

Employee advocacy; Organizational legitimacy; Affective commitment; Circular economy

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OSC09 Organisational Communication in Mediated Public Spheres

PP 1109 Beyond one-size-fits-all: Diversity perceptions among employees in German-speaking Europe vs. the United States

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In times of shifting political and societal grounds, diversity has become contested terrain in organizational communication. While some organizations advance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives as pathways to more equitable futures, others give in to growing backlash and resistance (Murray & Bohannon, 2025). The cultural context also shapes diversity discourses. European discussions often center on gender equality and language, while United States debates emphasize cultural and ethnical differences. These divergent contexts complicate communication for multinational corporations navigating legal requirements, cultural expectations, and diverse workforces. Thus, understanding employee perceptions of diversity is critical, which raises the fundamental question: What do employees associate with "diversity in organizations"?

This study employs social representation theory (Moscovici, 2001) to examine how employees in German-speaking countries (Austria and Germany) and the United States construct meaning around "diversity in organizations". Social

representations capture collectively shared meanings that emerge through social negotiation, distinguishing between stable core elements (universally shared across groups) and flexible peripheral elements (context-dependent and malleable). This theoretical lens enables comparison across countries and demographic groups while identifying strategies for organizational communication.

Within an online questionnaire, employees in Austria and Germany ($N = 322$) and the United States ($N = 280$) provided free associations with "diversity in organizations" and rated them as negative, neutral, or positive to capture perceptions and evaluations, respectively. This approach reduces response bias by avoiding predetermined response categories. In the analysis we distinguished between a stable core—frequently and early-mentioned associations—and peripheries of less spontaneous or rare associations.

Results reveal that inclusion and equal opportunity form the central core across all groups and are consistently evaluated positively. However, in the United States, race and the inclusion of different cultural backgrounds constitute stable core associations whereas in German-speaking countries, gender diversity and equality are more central. Notably, while men and women associate identical content in the core, men's evaluations are generally more negative. Furthermore, U.S. participants evaluate their associations—and thus the entire concept of diversity—considerably more positively than German-speaking respondents.

These findings offer both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, this free association approach extends theoretical applications in the communications field. Practically, results provide guidance for organizational communicators for developing diversity messages in an era of deepening social divisions. Communication should anchor to shared core elements for comprehensibility while acknowledging group-specific emotional evaluations. Messages contradicting the communicative core risk triggering reactance; change is more effectively initiated through peripheral elements that remain open to new content. By understanding how different groups construct diversity meanings, organizations can move beyond one-size-fits-all approaches toward communication strategies that acknowledge diverse realities, serve pluralistic societies, and resonate across shifting grounds.

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OSC09 Organisational Communication in Mediated Public Spheres

PP 1110 AI, strategic public sector communication, and natural disasters in Czechia, Italy, and Spain

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The increasing use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) in public sector communication (Canel & Luoma-aho 2019) is changing the way governments communicate in ordinary situations but also convey risk, uncertainty, and authority during times of crisis and emergencies (Lovari & De Rosa 2025; OECD 2025). This transformation is particularly crucial in the strategic communication of natural disasters and climate-related emergencies, where governments and public sector organizations must inform, reassure, and mobilize citizens amid rapidly evolving information environments (Schwarz et al. 2025). This paper, part of the activities of a EDUC WIDE Seed research project, examines how the adoption of AI-enabled communication tools is reshaping public strategies, public trust, and susceptibility to disinformation environments (Madan & Ashok 2023; World Economic Forum 2025), in a context where, despite broad social recognition of the severity of climate change and strong scientific consensus, structural governance deficits and limited trust in institutions continue to hinder effective collective responses (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023).

This research in progress study uses a mixed-methods research design to triangulate public attitudes, institutional perspectives, and policy practices in three European democracies: Czechia, Italy, and Spain. First, the paper analyzes Eurobarometer (2024, 2025) data from these three countries to evaluate citizens' perceptions of digital government communication, levels of institutional trust, perceived polarization about climate change, and sensitivity to disinformation during environmental risks and disasters' situations. Second, a comparative desk analysis examines digital government communication initiatives related to natural disasters and climate change. This analysis maps if any AI-supported strategy is implemented for public sector communication activities, and deployed to counter disinformation, frame risk, and coordinate the public response. This analysis reveals shared strategic logics and country-specific adaptations influenced by political culture, administrative capacity, and media systems. Third, in-depth interviews (Knott et al., 2022) with public-sector communicators explore the incorporation of GAI into strategic communication during climate-related crises and natural disasters that recently affected the three countries, as well as its adoption for future events. The focus is on institutional goals, perceived benefits,

communicative innovations and ethical concerns (Bowen 2024; Bright et al. 2024). The interviews shed light on how communicators navigate the tension between speed, personalization, and credibility when using AI-assisted tools in high-stakes situations, and polluted and problematic information environment (Gregor & Mlejnková 2021; Junk & Kim 2025).

The paper identifies key structural tensions in contemporary strategic public sector communication by integrating these data sources (OECD 2021). Although GAI can improve governments' ability to communicate on a large scale and in real time during emergencies, its use coincides with a decline in external verification mechanisms and increased distrust and public skepticism toward official institutional messaging (Edelman 2025; Smillie & Scharfbillig 2024). This paper contributes to the field of strategic and organizational communication by situating AI-driven communication within broader debates on digital platform governance and democratic legitimacy. From an empirical standpoint, it offers an underexplored cross-national comparison of AI-enabled public sector communication regarding natural disasters and disinformation practices around it.

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PP 1111 Reinventing the message? A systematic review on reshaping storytelling through artificial intelligence in strategic communication

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Humans are often characterized as *Homo-Narrans*, a term emphasizing our inherent capacity for storytelling and symbolic creation (Fisher, 1984). Historically, storytelling has been expressed in diverse media, spanning from cave walls of Altamira and Lascaux, the Egyptian Westcar Papyrus, the Javanese Wayang leather puppetry, and the Greek communal feasts (Schabert & Heyking, 2020). As media technology has evolved from analog machines like the printing press to digital computers and now to Large Language Models (LLMs), storytelling has become a more transformational phenomenon than ever. These storytelling machines are no longer dependent on humans as storytellers; they now also serve as active co-creators through their algorithmic constructions. AI is progressively replacing humans when it comes to managing the storytelling process, from pre-production to post-production (Manu, 2024). Given that storytelling is a crucial technique for achieving organizational objectives, this raises a critical question: how do these AI tools fundamentally reshape the process of storytelling in strategic communication?

Although exploring storytelling in today´s AI era is timely and highly relevant for strategic communication (Gregory & Smith, 2025), the field lacks a systematic review to understand the impact of AI at the intersection of strategic communication with storytelling. Existing state-of-the-art research has predominantly concentrated on the content generation capabilities of AI (Yu et al., 2025), making it difficult to derive conclusions or a comprehensive picture of AI storytelling in strategic communication. Weller and Lock (2025) and Sutherland (2025) sought to create a holistic overview of AI in strategic communication. However, the topic is constrained to strategic communication in general, with a primary focus on the process of using algorithms to generate content automatically. Furthermore, several closely related topics have been examined, for example, by Fang et al.(2023), who focus on story-writing or Quah and Ng (2022), who concentrate more on digital storytelling rather than specific integration of AI.

Therefore, this article provides an overview of the current state of research in AI storytelling in strategic communication and highlights research desiderata. This research employs a systematic literature review, analyzing 2,030 papers from international peer-reviewed journals listed in renowned scientific databases (Business Premier, PsycArticles, Scopus, and Web of Science), relevant to storytelling, strategic communication, and artificial intelligence. The study provides a critical examination of the current state of the field, enabling scholars to contribute to the development of a distinctive body of knowledge on the implementation of storytelling in AI-driven strategic communication. It will also add to theory-building in the field. As a remedy, this study provides (1) multi-dimensional typologies of AI-enhanced storytelling rooted in an interdisciplinary analysis, (2) a conceptual definition of artificial strategic storytelling, (3) an overview of factors relevant to the process, (4) core texts, authors, and publication outlets, and (5) a discussion of the implementation of this topic for strategic communication research and practice.

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OSC09 Organisational Communication in Mediated Public Spheres

PP 1112 Trust in practice: The application of trustworthiness in Dutch health campaigns

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Introduction

Trust is widely regarded as a key mechanism for increasing the uptake of health advice in strategic communication. A dominant operationalization of trust is the ability, benevolence, and integrity framework (ABI, Mayer et al. 1995), yet it is unclear to what extent such theoretical models are actually used in the design of real-world campaigns. This study examines how public health communication professionals understand and operationalize "trustworthiness" in the production of Dutch mass media health campaigns.

Methods

We conducted reconstruction interviews with a diverse sample of Dutch communication professionals (n = 20) working in for-profit, non-profit and governmental organizations. Between April and July 2025, participants systematically reviewed specific campaigns they had recently produced, covering a range of behaviors and risk levels (e.g., smoking cessation, childhood vaccination, sexual health). The reconstruction method anchors reflections in concrete outputs and decisions rather than abstract ideals. Interviews were extensively analyzed using inductive thematic coding in Atlas.ti.

Findings

Our findings show that the "ability" dimension of trust is applied by communicating facts and invoking authority. Campaigns in our sample highlight evidence of effectiveness (e.g., reduction in hospitalization risk), draw on medical authority (e.g., images of GPs, references to experts), and are often disseminated via trusted intermediaries such as doctor's offices.

Benevolence and integrity are frequently translated into a broader notion of authenticity. Professionals emphasize "real people with real stories," familiar and realistic scenarios, and identifiable characters as ways to enhance perceived sincerity and moral alignment.

At the same time, trust does not consistently guide all stages of campaign development. When working with creative agencies, participants describe a tension between portraying trustworthiness and producing "thumb-stopping" content for crowded platforms, in which attention-grabbing aesthetics sometimes override trust-related considerations.

A third recurring theme that falls outside of the ABI framework is the importance attributed to audience autonomy. Many professionals express reluctance to give direct behavioral advice, instead framing campaigns as facilitating "informed choice" through transparency and high-quality information. In this framing, individuals are invited to decide for themselves, which sits uneasily alongside explicit goals such as increasing vaccination uptake. Stressing autonomy can be seen as a distinct mechanism for behavior change that diminishes the reliance on trust in health campaigns.

Overall, the strategies described reflect predominantly one-way communication and reveal a persistent tension between informative and persuasive aims.

Conclusion

By opening up the production processes of contemporary Dutch health campaigns, this study illustrates how trust models, particularly the ABI framework, are selectively translated, stretched (e.g., via authenticity), and sometimes sidelined in practice. The findings highlight both conceptual gaps (e.g., the role of autonomy) and practical constraints (e.g., platform logics, creative agency priorities) that limit the systematic application of trust theory. Future research should further align trust models with practitioners' realities and explore more dialogic, two-way campaign approaches that can foster trust without obscuring strategic objectives.

OSC09 Organisational Communication in Mediated Public Spheres

PP 1113 Chatting with the organization –are AI-agents as organizational representatives part of its strategic communication?

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The importance of AI for organizations is hardly something that can be ignored. However, there is a tendency to focus on the technological, ethical and legal aspects, rather than the communicative. The need for organizational communication scholars to engage with AI as a communicative agent, have recently been highlighted (Guldbrandsen et al., 2024, Laapotti & Raappana, 2022). Much of earlier research have missed the organizational perspective, and tend to focus on the micro-level instead of the organizational level (Syvänen & Velentini, 2020).

In an attempt to remedy the lack focus on communication, organization, and practical examples, this study is an empirically driven study based on ethnographic observations withing a large governmental organization. The 16 months of recurring observations have followed the team of AI-trainers that not only train the AI, but author all of its responses themselves.

These AI-trainers were all previously customer service agents in the organization, who began training the AI after receiving basic training in the AI-platform. During the observations, the communication department faced several challenges regarding how the AI agent in question could be implemented on an external, cross agency, website. The discussions between the communication department and the AI-trainers, as well as interviews and documentation, inform this study.

During the discussions, it became obvious that the communication department members lacked knowledge about how the AI agent in question worked. They expressed disbelief when they realized that the responses were not made through generative AI, but rather they were written by the AI -trainers. This highlights a need for more insight and knowledge regarding the organizations AIs. Recently, research regarding AI as spokesperson in crisis communication have been highlighted (Olbermann & Nagl, 2025), as well as their eligibility within different types of advertisement (Yim et al., 2025). However, much more attention is required for its strategic importance for organizational communication. The results of this study showed that despite internal expertise, the communication department deferred to the AI-trainers regarding strategic choices surrounding the AI agent. This poses several questions, such as "what kind of support and competencies are required to ensure that AI-trainers are able to align with the organizations strategic communication?". And, "how much of the AIs impact on organizational communication is currently missed by communication departments due to lack of knowledge?"

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PHC01 Theoretical Frameworks

PP 0058 Rhetorical conversation analysis: A new methodology for language and communication research

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This paper develops and illustrates **Rhetorical Conversation Analysis (RCA)** — a new method for studying speech as lived rhetoric. RCA integrates the micro-analytic rigour of **Conversation Analysis (CA)** with the interpretive range of **rhetorical theory** to reveal how people **articulate themselves** in dialogue and conversation.

RCA is designed to investigate how speech acts operate simultaneously on multiple levels: as interactional structures, rhetorical forms, and expressions of stance, affect, and imagination. By combining detailed transcription with rhetorical interpretation, the project establishes a bridge between the humanities and the social sciences and demonstrates how meaning can be studied empirically without reductionism.

The methodology rests on the principle that **rhetorical form is empirical**. Pauses, hesitations, tropes, and echoes are not psychological traces but observable phenomena through which people **articulate** relations, values, and orientations. RCA thus resists both the positivist reduction of meaning to form and the post-structuralist dissolution of form into indeterminacy.

RCA proceeds in **four analytical layers**, each corresponding to a level of empirical engagement:

1. **Temporal Layer (CA-based transcription)** Captures the sequential organization of talk: pauses, overlaps, intonation, prosodic contours, and timing. This layer ensures analytic precision and reproducibility, following Jeffersonian conventions as a starting point.
2. **Textual Layer (rhetorical patterning)** Identifies tropes, figures, and compositional features — metaphor, irony, repetition, metonymy, citation — as manifestations of reasoning-in-interaction. Here, rhetoric is not decoration but the *logic of speech as relation.*
3. **Interpretive Layer (analytic commentary)** Situates rhetorical acts within broader affective, ethical, or cultural frames, treating each conversational turn as a moment of self-articulation. The interpretive act is transparent, justified by evidence from the transcript, and open to intersubjective discussion.
4. **Reflexive Layer (analytic writing as dialogue)** Recognises that the researcher's description continues the conversation rather than standing outside of it. The analysis is written rhetorically — as an act of engagement with the material — embodying the method's epistemology. RCA treats speech not as data extracted from subjects but as acts of expression demanding ethical listening. The analytic process mirrors the conversational ethic it studies: attentiveness, responsiveness, and respect for individuality. Reflexivity is therefore not an add-on but intrinsic to the method's structure.

Rhetorical Conversation Analysis offers a new way to study human communication: one that is empirically rigorous, theoretically generative, and ethically attuned. By uniting the analytic precision of CA with the interpretive insight of rhetoric, **RCA transforms how we understand what it means to speak** — and what it means to listen. By rethinking the relation between speech, writing, and mind, RCA reclaims rhetoric as a living, empirical discipline and offers a new paradigm for studying how humans — and intelligent systems — live in and with language. RCA contributes to the need for an explicit language to analyse the **dimension of articulation** within communication. In this way it helps us to become aware of the irreducible, personal and "owned" dimension of communication. At a time of shifting grounds in linguistic communication as a result of the rise of AI, a methodologically precise way of studying our existence as speaking beings is crucial, not only scientifically but also existentially.

PHC01 Theoretical Frameworks

PP 0059 Factuality as freedom: Defying algorithmic inevitability

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Leopold von Ranke's famous dictum that the historian must "simply show how it really was" has long been critiqued in philosophy of communication as an aspiration to naive positivism. However, the current inquiry into whether futures will rely on human decisions or machine-based constructions demands a radical re-evaluation of Ranke's mandate. Today, the shift from the physical archive to the digital dataset represents an ontological rupture: the past is not merely recorded for reflection; it is datafied to train algorithmic models that preemptively construct the future. In this ecosystem, truth is displaced by engagement metrics, and historical factuality is dissolved into probabilistic modeling.

This paper addresses these "technical shifting grounds" by revisiting Ranke through the lens of Timothy Snyder's philosophy of history, specifically integrating his critique of the "politics of inevitability" developed in *The Road to Unfreedom* (2018) with his recent reconceptualization of liberty in *On Freedom* (2024). I argue that the algorithmic environment realizes the darkest potential of a non-correspondence view of truth. If we accept the postmodern premise that reality is merely a linguistic construction, we are left defenseless against "algorithmic constructivism," where truth is nothing more than a statistical output optimized for behavioral modification.

Central to this analysis is Snyder's redefinition of freedom not as a negative state, but as positive positive work comprising five interconnected forms: sovereignty, unpredictability, mobility, factuality, and solidarity. Digital platforms, driven by the attention economy and surveillance capitalism, actively erode this entire ecosystem. Algorithmic prediction embodies the "politics of inevitability," eliminating human unpredictability by enforcing past patterns on the future. The "politics of eternity" destroys sovereignty and restricts mental mobility, trapping users in static loops of grievance and ideological echo chambers that prevent perspective-taking. Furthermore, by atomizing reality into personalized feeds, these systems undermine the solidarity required for collective action.

Crucially, this paper posits factuality not just as an epistemic preference, but as the sine qua non of democracy. Snyder argues that democracy is inherently a conversation about resolving common problems, a process impossible without a shared factual reality. When algorithms fragment reality into personalized fictions, the demos disintegrates. If we cannot agree on "how it really was" (Ranke), we cannot build the solidarity required for self-governance nor hold power accountable. Thus, the defense of the correspondence theory of truth becomes an act of civic resistance: a moral realism necessary to prevent the public sphere from collapsing into a machine-generated hallucination.

The analysis concludes that the "future" depends on our ability to assert a reality independent of the code. By integrating Snyder's ethical demand for factual grounding with a realist philosophy of communication, I contend that objectivity must be reclaimed as an ontological anchor. Only by insisting on a realist stance, where truth is found, not made, can we disrupt the algorithmic prediction loop and ensure that the future remains a domain of open human decision rather than a calculated inevitability.

PHC01 Theoretical Frameworks

PP 0060 Theories for a shifting world and how to construct them

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In communication studies, there are regular complaints about the lack of genuine theories and the reliance on approaches from other disciplines. This goes hand in hand with the fact that there are hardly any approaches to theory development that go beyond modifying existing approaches. Theories are often understood only as a basis for empirical work and are therefore not themselves the subject of consideration. Suggestions for theory development that deviate from the logic of statistical testing usually remain vague and tend to provide only general guidance.

To address this problem, an approach to theory development is proposed here that makes it possible to grasp a social phenomenon theoretically and classify it in terms of social theory. Here, theories are understood as means that make it possible to grasp and comprehend reality. The often presumed contradiction between social theories and theories of middle-range is addressed by Merton (1967), who describes a complementary relationship in which social theories are necessary to interpret the results of empirical work based on middle-range theories. The approach described here moves between both levels and mediates between them.

Three logics are used in this process:

1. Concept formation

Theory formation is based on a description of the phenomenon to be theorised, which ends in a defined concept. This concept must be clearly distinguished from its everyday use on the one hand and from its scholarly use in other disciplines on the other. The description is based on both existing theoretical considerations of the phenomenon and empirical findings.

2. Theorizing

According to Swedberg (2016), theorizing is a practice that uses a concept and the associated findings to make assumptions about the phenomenon, whereby existing knowledge can also be used for differentiation and not merely for affirmation. Scientifically guided speculation is not only permitted but necessary in order to be able to conceive new aspects at all. The goal is to arrive at generalisable abstractions of the phenomenon that serve to sharpen the concept.

3. Grounded theory

The circular logic of grounded theory is used to address the problem that the knowledge process cannot take place linearly. Already before the actual examination of the phenomenon, that phenomenon must already be described with a theoretical concept. This form of theory formation is therefore based on the continuous updating and testing of the concepts found and the re-evaluation of the underlying literature.

The following steps can therefore be derived:

1. Describing the phenomenon in detail
2. Developing a concept
3. Re-evaluating literature and concept
4. Placing the phenomenon in a perspective of social theory

This approach allows a phenomenon to be captured in a theory-forming way, and the choice of a public sphere theory perspective, for example, also enables a genuinely communication science theory. This proposal is intended to provide an opportunity for discussion of further options for communication theory formation.

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PHC01 Theoretical Frameworks

PP 0061 History as a form of dialoguing: The erotic and the postal paradigm of communication

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When we attempt to approach the nature of dialoguing as a philosophical method and its historicity, the straightforward way to do so is to write a letter to an open audience, one that is both temporal and spatially biased. If we take Plato's definition of what a dialogue is, as in the Seventh Letter, for instance, we can come across this assertion: «No treatise by me concerning it exists or ever will exist. For it does not admit of exposition like other branches of knowledge, but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly a light, as it were, is kindled in one soul by a flame that leapt to it from another.» The openness and closeness of this perspective entail the very notion of Language as speech and writing and its tokens. But both are intriguing and must be due to a rethinking of the process of language utterances themselves. If speech is considered its face-to-face form, then we must acknowledge that the whole mystery of the 'other' in arguing is set aside. I address you as if you will address me with no restraints. Subjects address the other here in a manner that does not assess the 'other' as different, thus as being in the same existential position. The fear of…, the anxiety facing with…, the *Angst* (the things in the world that are primarily *my* world) and *Furcht* (the things only in *my* world) (Hegel, Kierkegaard), is neglected in dialoguing through face-to-face Plato's paradigm. The beautiful mystery is that this *erotic* flux and drive to dialogue often leads to conflict. Thus, dialoguing can be confronting. The *erotic* principle of communication is on the edge of violence. Instead, the *postal* paradigm of communication, viz., that when an I address the 'other' conveyed by written words, the face is elapsed, the 'other' is not in the 'face' and on the same presupposed level, and what is addressed to the addressee is not intersected by empirical process's, sometimes too much empirical, pollution (*miasma*) of the utterances one is about to take. Plato had experienced both ways. What we are dealing with is the intersection between orality (*Speech*) and writing (*Letter*). Both are kept alive in some sense in the present day. But who or which will take the position in this new present situation where *erotic* and *postal* systems have already eroded? *The other,* as in dialogue, is too much present. In the *postal* system, the addressee is often unknown. In dwelling on these two extreme positions, we seek to acknowledge whether addressing the 'other' is a challenging or open address. If friendship (*philia*) is on one side, love (*agape*) is on the other. Therefore, we will investigate whether kinship or desire can be incorporated into forms of dialoguing. We will take a position on the *postal* paradigm and show that historical endeavour concerns a special form of dialoguing: sending without expecting any feedback. What is sent is done for its own sake

PHC01 Theoretical Frameworks

PP 0062 Fate, Image and Narrative: Past Futures and the Critique of Historical Inevitability

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One of the fundamental categories for the historical discernment of past futures (Vergangene Zukunft, in Reinhart Koselleck's sense) is the notion of fate. Koselleck conceives historicity through the tension between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation; past futures are the images of the future that, in a given present, orient action and organise temporal meaning. This paper argues that fate functions as a decisive semantic operator within that horizon, shaping how certain past futures become thinkable, necessary, or inevitable in specific historical contexts

As a central category of Greek philosophy, fate designated a necessity inscribed in the order of the cosmos, irreducible to human will. With Christianity, this necessity was refigured as providence, shifting the problem from cosmology to theology. Enlightenment reason rejected providential determination not by denying necessity as such, but by contesting heteronomous constraints on the human future as incompatible with autonomy and freedom. Fate was not eliminated as a philosophical problem; it was displaced from the explicit vocabulary of modern philosophy, persisting mainly in cultural, narrative, and symbolic forms.

Within Portuguese culture, deeply marked by fado as both song and moral value, fate retains particular relevance as a narrative mode of relating to historical time. Far from operating merely as belief in a future predetermined by a transcendent agency, fate functions as a narrative device for closing the past. Common formulas such as "what happened, happened because it had to happen" or "it was already written" retrospectively convert contingency into necessity, offering a stabilising account in the face of tragedy and limiting the disruptive force of events for which no satisfactory causal or moral explanation is available. Fate thus appears less as a cause of the future than as a way of producing meaning for the past.

Building on this claim, the paper analyses the Portuguese writer and poet Jaime Rocha, particularly his Trilogy of Evil, in which the character Mateus, a fisherman, confronts a fate that seems to condemn him to shipwreck. Here, fate does not appear as resigned fatalism, but as a horizon of conflict: it fixes reality precisely so that struggle and resistance become legible, reopening a field of possibilities within what appears inevitable.

Walter Benjamin's notion of the dialectical image provides a critical counterpoint to destinal narratives that organise history as necessary continuity. In the Theses on the Concept of History, Benjamin criticises the integration of the past into a homogeneous temporal continuum that legitimises the present and naturalises certain futures as inevitable from the standpoint of the victors. The historical images produced in this way function as images of fate: they enclose contingency and transform past expectations into retrospective necessity. The dialectical image interrupts this continuum by bringing heterogeneous times into a critical constellation, freeing the past from the function of justifying the present and making visible unrealised expectations and interrupted past futures. In this way, it opposes the narrative of historical inevitability.

PHC02 Digital: Pasts and Futures

PP 0167 Neither black nor box: Unwrapping human agency in AI algorithms processes

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This paper tackles the pressing question of how to ensure human agency and oversight in AI systems, moving beyond the notion of algorithms as incomprehensible "black boxes." Modern AI algorithms (especially complex machine learning models) are often criticized for their opacity, which can undermine users' autonomy and trust. In response, the research aims to explore methods to open up or re-design these systems to better incorporate human insight, values, and control. This aligns closely with international ethical guidelines: for instance, the European Commission's AI ethics guidelines. By examining frameworks such as explainable AI, algorithmic transparency, and human-in-the-loop design, the paper seeks to ensure that AI tools enhance rather than erode human decision-making power.

The title "Neither Black Nor Box" thus reflects an ambition to go beyond treating AI as an inscrutable magic box – instead, unwrapping algorithm through a thorough analytical process based on XAI engineering step-by-step instruction. When it comes to robotics, algorithms, and AI, the contemporary social sciences focus strongly on moral agency (Himma, 2009; Gunkel, 2012), normative and legal aspects (Bryson, 2010; Jiang et al., 2021; Mamak, 2022), politics (Coeckelbergh, 2022), or even theology (Smith, 2022). There's also a developing body of works that deal with the relations between human and non-human social actors, social bots (Coeckelbergh, 2021; Guzman, 2018; Guzman & Lewis, 2020' Johansson, 2022).

In this study, I analyse the problem of human agency interactions with technological agency in the optics of relational ontology. Thus, I consider relations - based on primal communication mechanism - as the primary ontological premise affecting what the objects of interactions are (Pleszczyński, 2013, 2020). Communication is not only the method of the agency but also the basic ontological premise with agential power. Objects of the human - tech relations are inseparable in the relation and do not exist outside it (Barad, 2008; Orlikowski, Scott, 2008). Moreover, agency in a human-technology

relation is a discursive practice that operates on meaning and power. However, what seems crucial for relational ontology is the perception and understanding of technology by human actors in terms of *alterity*, that is, to what extent technological agents became 'the other' or the 'quasi-other' (Idhle, 1990; Frijns et al., 2020). Since the relation is based on power disproportions and may follow the 'the uncanny valley factor' (Ciechanowski et al., 2018; Mori, 2012), human actors need to anthropomorphize and reduce the complexity of non-human actors in the process of meaning-making (cf. Sundar, 2008).

Hence, I analyse three algorithms and the process of their construction following a specific framework deployed from programming and IT to social sciences in a step-by-step instruction based on: creation of database, data model, initial data processing, statistical analysis, data filtering, data training and validating, variables mapping, vector space creation, algorithms training and validation, data filtering and fine-tunning of the model. In this procedure, I combine strictly algorithmic methods of analysis with the social sciences one including: XAI modelling based on recommendation systems, surveying, IDIs, critical analysis and algorithmic netnography.

PHC02 Digital: Pasts and Futures

PP 0168 Exploiting the prompt: operativity and cultural techniques in large language models

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Prompting in Large Language Models (LLMs) is typically framed as a merely instrumental form of input. This paper challenges that framing by reconceptualizing prompting as an operative cultural technique (Siegert, 2015). We argue that this practice fundamentally reorganizes the act of writing, reconfigures human-machine relations, and reshapes contemporary subjectivity. We contend that a reflexive, tactical approach to prompting constitutes a productive practice of critical digital literacy.

Conceived as the set of instructions formulated to trigger algorithmic generative processes, prompting cannot be adequately described as a purely linguistic process. Rather, it constitutes a techno-symbolic operation, insofar as it produces operative conditions from which text emerges as a contingent effect of pre-existing, data-trained technical processes. Instead of a continuous authorial gesture, writing is reorganised through iteration and adjustment, marked by a recursive relation between human activation and the statistical combinatorics of LLMs, in a form of "calculation of meaning" (Hayles, 2019).

As a cultural technique, like others such as counting or mapping, prompting functions as a practice that precedes the medial concepts it itself generates. In operating, it articulates fundamental distinctions – such as question and answer, intention and execution, human and machine, which are instituted operatively, even prior to any reflexive thematisation, thereby stabilising regimes of action.

Writing is not only transformed into a practice of command, but what has been discussed since post-structuralism as the problem of the subject of writing and communication is further complexified. In a text entitled *"Subjectivity as Medium of the Media"* (2011), Boris Groys argues that the contemporary subject is no longer one who fully masters the formulation and transmission of messages, but rather one who channels information flows, intervening less at the level of meaning than at the material level of their direction, intensity, and circulation: "this subject becomes the medium of the media – the messenger that transmits the message of the media" (p. 8). Groys, nevertheless, emphasises that such channelling is not innocent: by editing and organising flows, the 'operative subject' produces meaning, while simultaneously rendering the workings of the medium observable.

In a mediascape populated by summary acts of activation and feedback, prompting can thus be configured not merely as an instrumental action of command aimed at ready-made results—a 'means to an end'—but as a form of tactical media (Critical Art Ensemble, 2001) that can be mobilised to expose, or even subvert, the functioning of LLMs, including their biases, discursive uniformity, and automation of writing. Exploring limits, variations, and deviations, or even inducing system hallucinations- not against the system, but from within it, in the form of an exploit (Galloway & Thacker, 2007)- constitutes a potentially disruptive gesture capable of rendering the human–system interaction auto-reflexive.

Based on a conceptual and mediological analysis of prompting, together with experimental practices of interaction with LLMs (Rumbelow, 2023), this paper advances the hypothesis that, when understood in this way, tactical prompting configures a form of critical digital literacy (Gerlich, 2025), capable of displacing or disarticulating distinctions crystallised in automated cultural techniques.

PHC02 Digital: Pasts and Futures

PP 0169 Patterns of the past misremembered: Digital media and disjointed modellings of imagined pasts

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The modelling possibilities AI can quickly create visual and textual representations of past events and scenarios which are both unreal but also sometimes uncannily realistic. Using the metaphor of a time machine, how might these artificially generated simulacra be compared to embodied memory or historical accounts as a mode of shifting between temporalities

of past, present and future? Memory and history are entangled through cultural practices, and the practice of prompting an AI to envision or describe the past brings together the future orientation of semiosis and the informational nature of visual and textual archives to open a speculative window on the curiosity of AI creations and to satisfy the visual and narrative hunger of the curious. What might be the role of generative technologies when coupled with imagination and the desire to see what was never documented when trying to understand collective and personal history? Multidisciplinary artist Laurie Anderson has long experimented with AI as a dialogical creative tool to create speculative worlds as a place to encounter other versions of her own voice and speech, or to create virtual reality worlds for herself and others as a performative experience. Anderson's approach both embraces the mysterious black box of how AI generates outputs while being explicit with her artistic intentions and desires in generating material. This includes visualising the tall tales of her grandfather Axel Anderson to create a photo album of his life as he told it, rather than how it actually was. While these disjointed experiments with an obviously fictional life history make no claims to show how her grandfather's undocumented childhood really looked or how events in his life actually unfolded, the artificially generated images speak instead of the complex relationship between the ways our imagination desires to see what was never documented or invents alternate narratives for how the past could or should have been, and how these are entangled with wishes for the present and future. These artistic experiments are a rich exploration of why we desire to use the affordances of modelling technologies and the subjunctive aesthetics they afford to act 'as if' they were a time machine and visualise and write the documentation of fictional virtual histories that can only be met through media technologies. with the capacity to externally visualise and model them for collective contemplation. Anderson's engagement with AI as a world-building tool raises many interesting questions regarding how unreal pasts can be entangled with the present and provide an authentic, yet often also absurd, imaginary of a past that never was. Her work shows how entering into a playful dialogue with generative technologies helps maintain an outlook toward the future and the past that is free and indeterminate.

PHC02 Digital: Pasts and Futures

PP 0170 Rethinking flow in digital communication: A conceptual and methodological framework

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'Flow' has long been an essential concept in media and communication studies, emphasizing the movement, exchange, and consumption of information and content across individuals, organisations, markets, and societies. Coined by Raymond Williams (1974) to denote both the technological feature and cultural form of broadcasting, the concept has been equally important for understanding the spread of information through a two- or multi-step *flow* of communication (Lazarsfeld and Katz, 1955). From a more technical perspective, the physical transmission of a message from a sender through various transmitters and channels to the receiver (Shannon & Weaver, 1948) can also be described as a *flow*. Likewise, the circulation of information between apps and platforms can be described as "data flows" (Helmond 2015) and "money flows" capture the financial exchanges within companies and with external partners (Investopedia 2025). On the macro-scale, Castells (2001) argued that a core feature of information societies is the "space of flows" organized through networks, protocols, and infrastructures rather than geography.

While concrete conceptualisations and applications differ across traditions and analytical points of departure, a common denominator for studies of flows is a dynamic emphasis on *interchange* as a central characteristic of communication. In contemporary research, this perspective appears in studies of how digital content is continuously reproduced and shared, how users move between sites and interfaces, how data is collected and distributed, how money is generated and reinvested, and so forth. Regardless of whether we seek to understand the sociocultural, institutional, or infrastructural circumstances around communication, the transfer of value – in symbolic or material form – is imperative. This makes *flows* an equally fundamental and opaque object of analysis for media and communication researchers, calling for theoretical as well as empirical and methodological development of the concept and strategies for studying it.

In this paper, we present a framework to guide empirical studies of the various types of flows that shape digital communication and discuss the epistemic implications of employing different research strategies. That is, we develop a typology for gauging concrete units of analysis, distinguishing between flows of information, users, money, data, and, finally, energy as a vital, and increasingly scarce, resource in the communication economy. For each of these analytical units, we identify available methods and research instruments for studying them, pointing out the economic, legal, and infrastructural conditions that enable and constrain our capabilities as researchers. We illustrate the framework through a case study of the various flows in OpenAI's services from the circulation of data and money, the organization of information and users, and the operation of infrastructures and data centres.

In summary, the paper offers a rethinking of flow through a novel conceptual and methodological framework that can be operationalized in studies of digital communication across platforms and services.

PHC02 Digital: Pasts and Futures

PP 0171 The work of art in the age of its technical generativity: How visual media theory illuminates Generative AI

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In the growing field of Critical AI Studies, it has been claimed that the humanities are failing to understand so-called 'AI' by resorting to "traditional humanistic theoretical frameworks that simply do not suffice anymore" (Offert in Bajohr, 2025, p. 115). While not disagreeing entirely, I argue that the study of the history of media sheds light on 'AI' in general, since this object entails certain aspects whose mediatic ground was not only laid many decades ago, but is even more evident through media theory works either not central today or simply not properly considered in this context.

In this presentation, I would like to propose several ways in which Walter Benjamin's *oeuvre* illuminates crucial aspects of images made by stable diffusion processes or other stochastic machine learning (ML) processes within artificial neural networks, hereafter referred to as Gen AI images. This author is frequently named in passing in the context of AI aesthetics (Manovich & Arielli, 2024; Ramos & Ferreira, 2024), and his theory been reviewed in the AI era (Ambrosini, 2025), but its relevancy for understanding the field of Generative AI remains insufficiently explored.

That ML and neural networks-based technologies were quickly capable of generating images can be explained, on the one hand, by the collapse of the image/text distinction these systems bring about, as proposed recently by Bajohr (2024). These systems work with interchangeable tokens and function as black boxes to themselves. This poses no particular problem to pictures, since, as Benjamin helps explain, the collapse of the representational model arrived much earlier in visual arts (through mechanical or technical image reproduction) than to other fields in poetics, creativity and communication.

On the other hand, and more relevantly, Gen AI images come about by virtue of what computational image archives constitute (and have constituted for a long time) as extensions of information organization systems containing mechanical or technical reproductions.

The non-representative character of LLMs imbues this process of statistics and pattern recognition with a productive irrationality, accelerated by programmed sycophancy and agreeableness, to the point of a form of psychosis. Not far off was the non-specialist public, or Benjamin's "absent-minded examiner,"(Benjamin, 1969, p. 19) producing judgments devoid of critical value, making collages of figures whose origin they did not know, joining the vast masses that throughout the 20th century and up to today have been making the world's appearance. In both cases, these processes result from forms of loss of aura or rupture with the tradition that, before the age of exhibition value, gave rise to the work of art.

I will conduct comparative case studies of Gen AI images (to be determined) and montage or collage art (e.g., *Pictures at an Exhibition*, by Chris Marker). Other texts by Benjamin on images, art and history will be analysed.

PHC03 Art and Communication: An Interface

PP 0275 Rage Against the (prompt) Machine. Large Language Models and shifts in authorship, meaning-making, and creative process

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The paper offers a critical reflection on the development of artificial intelligence (AI), with particular emphasis on generative language models and content-generation algorithms, in the context of contemporary culture industries and creative practices. It intervenes in the ongoing debate on how technology called AI contributes to shifts in traditional understandings of authorship, meaning-making, and creative process.

The point of departure (and the obvious title reference) is an analogy with a declaration made by the band Rage Against the Machine in 1992. The sleeve notes of their debut album state "no samples, keyboards, or synthesizers used in the making of this record." The instrumentation was meant to be organic, and the sound was to originate from a human performer. The statement can be read not only as a bold manifesto of artistic self-confidence but also as another, yet unexpected, voice in a debate on the relationship between art and technology dating back at least to Romanticism. Contemporary artists' declarations that they "do not use AI" repeat this gesture. However, their conditions, technological and market, are radically different.

The paper's point of departure is a critique of the language used to describe "AI". Drawing on the concept of the double articulation of media (Roger Silverstone, after Raymond Williams), the paper argues that the discursive status of medium is culturally as significant as mediation it performs. The term "artificial intelligence" obscures the actual nature of large language models as tools of statistical data processing devoid of consciousness or intention. This linguistic shift facilitates the naturalization of the technology and weakens critical reflection on its economic background – all discussed in the paper.

AI appears as a part of a broader processes of mediatization and datafication of social life, driven by global technology corporations. A key issue in this context are the ethical foundations of LLMs, since their training on copyrighted works is widely perceived as an unprecedented form of appropriation or theft. Against this backdrop, the paper problematizes

the status of the creative work in the age of AI. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's concept of aura, the socio-cultural status of (radically decontextualized) model-generated texts is analyzed. This process of "de-auralization" of culture is amplified by the market and institutional effects of AI in the field of culture industries. Within the literary one, for instance, one can observe accelerated publishing cycles, the rise of "fast literature," the proliferation of machine-generated content, and the blurring of authorship.

The paper also discusses how LLMs affect broader cultural phenomena in digital capitalism. In this light, following Vilém Flusser's concept of apparatus acting upon its actor, the author traces shifts in criteria of evaluation of human creative work regardless of whether individual authors make direct use of AI: the potentiality of a particular culture text to be (co-) generated by LLMs changes the very act of reading (or listening, or watching). In a similar manner, the use of AI-generated slop to illustrate documentary materials undermines the ontological status of photography and film as technologies of remembering.

PHC03 Art and Communication: An Interface

PP 0276 The elimination of technological determinism through antihumanism?

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Accusations of technological determinism are perhaps the greatest challenge facing theories that seek to conceptualize communication, society and their change from a mediacentric perspective. The "hard" version of technological determinism presumes, that introduction of technology inevitably leads to changing social processes, i.e. technological changes determine social changes (e.g. the printing press leads to Reformation, the cotton gin - to the persistence of slavery in Southern states, thus to the American Civil War, etc.). The critics, however, argue that this hard form of technological determinism has numerous shortcomings, because it is based on the monocausal explanation, which is suspicious in terms of historical research. Therefore, more widespread is the "soft" form of technological determinism. It argues that technologies influence social change by responding to social needs. This version of technological determinism might be found in various theories explaining the role of the media in social change (M. Castells' theory of Information society, the institutional version of mediatization, the idea of mediated construction of reality, etc.)

All these theoretical approaches share the humanist assumption that humans and their agency play the key role in the formation of the social world, softening the hardcore technological approach.

But what if the emphasis on humanism is not the only way out of technological determinism? Media materialism championed by Friedrich Kittler challenges such humanist approach. From the media-materialist point of view the very problem of technological determinism arises because media theories start with humans and analyze the impact of technology on them. The mistake of technological determinism lies not in the undervaluation of humans, but on the contrary, in their exaltation! Kittler criticizes the primacy of human subjects, the idea of communication as mutual understanding, the notion of history as a continuous process. He argues that we should rather perceive history as series of successive discourse networks (Aufschreibsysteme), determining our situation. These networks essentially are media regimes, which aim at storage, processing and transmission of information. They have nothing to do with meaning or worldview; therefore, we should not humanize them or the media. On the contrary the human mind is a wetware optimized in accordance with the prevailing discourse network and for the purposes of the latter. "So-called humans" are the appendages of the media with rather technological functions.

From the first sight Kittler's theory might look like a radical version of technological determinism. However, I will argue that through the elimination of human component, Kittler theorizes the world where technologies determine technologies and the very idea of technological determinism becomes meaningless.

PHC03 Art and Communication: An Interface

PP 0277 Thinking otherwise together: Counterfactual cognition, games, and meaning

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This paper proposes a philosophical account of communication in which meaning emerges through the structuring of counterfactual cognition rather than through the transmission of information or the expression of pre-existing intentions. It argues that communicative understanding depends on how interlocutors orient themselves toward unrealized possibilities: what could have been said, how others might have responded, and which alternatives are treated as live or irrelevant in each context. Communication, on this view, actively organizes a shared space of cognitive possibilities.

Core thesis: *To communicate is to shape a space of counterfactual cognition by guiding attention toward certain possible moves, interpretations, and responses while rendering others invisible or unintelligible.*

The paper integrates three philosophical resources to develop this claim. First, it draws on Ricard Solé's notion of a space of cognitions to model the structured set of conceptual distinctions and transitions that are available *intersubjectively* to

agents engaged in communicative interaction. Second, it engages a philosophical conception of games inspired by Thi Nguyen, treating games as literal cognitive framings that cultivate specific modes of agency by organizing attention, valuation, and sensitivity to possibilities. Third, it brings these perspectives into dialogue with core concerns of the Philosophy of Communication and pragmatics, particularly the counterfactual dimensions of implicature, illocutionary force, and communicative framing.

The "2/3 of the average" game plays a key theoretical-argumentative role. While Nguyen's account provides a philosophical framework for understanding games as cognitive framings of agency, the analysis of concrete games such as the "2/3 of the average" allows this paper to trace how such framings operate in practice by structuring recursive counterfactual expectations. Unlike games that foreground competition or payoff maximization, the "2/3" game exposes the structure of recursive counterfactual reasoning: participants must anticipate not merely others' choices, but others' anticipations of possible choices across multiple unrealized levels. Philosophically, the game makes visible how coordinated action depends on navigating a shared space of imagined alternatives rather than on explicit communication or stable conventions. A structurally similar dynamic appears in Kripke's analysis of the surprise paradox, where shared reasoning progressively eliminates possible outcomes, illustrating how expectations themselves can collapse a space of possibilities without the introduction of new information.

On this basis, the paper advances three contributions. First, it offers a counterfactual account of meaning as the reconfiguration of cognitive possibility spaces rather than as the exchange of semantic content. Second, it reconceptualizes communicative coordination as alignment within these spaces, where agents converge on which possibilities matter, rather than on what is simply true or intended. Third, it reframes misunderstanding and communicative breakdown as failures of counterfactual alignment—cases in which interlocutors inhabit differently structured spaces of imagined alternatives.

By foregrounding counterfactual cognition and its game-like organization, the paper contributes a conceptually grounded philosophy of communication that clarifies how meaning is shaped, stabilized, and contested in contemporary communicative environments, particularly those characterized by reflexivity, polarization, and strategic anticipation.

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PHC03 Art and Communication: An Interface

PP 0278 Visual communication on shifting grounds: Speed, meaning, and interpretation

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Communication practices today take place in conditions of rapid, continuous, and often unpredictable change, which destabilise established ways of understanding, interpretation, and meaning-making. In such an environment, communication increasingly operates in a mode of immediacy, where messages must be recognised and interpreted almost instantly, within contexts in which attention, audience expectations, and interpretative frameworks are constantly shifting. This instability of the communicative ground makes visual elements particularly relevant, as they enable quick orientation of attention and the structuring of meaning under conditions of limited time for reflection.

Starting from the assumption that speed and constant change are key characteristics of the contemporary communication environment, this paper problematises the role of visual communication as a primary means of meaning transmission in situations where verbal and discursive elaboration becomes secondary. In this context, visual elements are not understood as mere aesthetic additions to messages, but as carriers of meaning that activate existing cognitive and cultural patterns, enabling rapid recognition, orientation, and interpretation. Attention is not approached as a result of visual attractiveness alone, but as the outcome of alignment between visual form, conveyed meaning, and the audience's interpretative frameworks.

The paper develops a theoretical framework for understanding visual communication as a cognitive and meaning-making practice, in which the selection of visual elements represents a point of decision-making under unstable communicative conditions. In contemporary media environments, where messages are produced and distributed under the pressure of speed, visual elements such as composition, typography, colour, and form function as tools of rapid meaning organisation. They do not operate neutrally, but as cultural codes that pre-structure interpretation, limit possible meanings, and shape the communicative experience before the audience becomes aware of the interpretative process.

Methodologically, the paper is based on a conceptual and theoretical analysis of approaches from the philosophy of communication, cognitive information processing, and theories of meaning. Particular attention is given to the ways in which visual elements function as cognitive shortcuts under conditions of information overload, enabling fast interpretative judgments. Within this framework, the role of visual stereotypes is also examined. Rather than being analysed normatively, stereotypes are understood as existing interpretative resources whose function depends on context and communicative intent. They are viewed as tools that can stabilise meaning under conditions of instability, while at the same time limiting the interpretative horizon.

The paper contributes to philosophical debates on communication by shifting the focus from aesthetics as form to the visual as a means of rapid meaning organisation in conditions of continuous change. Visual communication is understood as a response to shifting communicative ground, in which the need for instant message transmission increases the responsibility involved in selecting visual elements. This perspective opens questions about the ethical and epistemological implications of visual communication in contemporary societies, where speed becomes a dominant value and meaning is produced under conditions of ongoing instability.

PHC03 Art and Communication: An Interface

PP 0279 An Accelerationist-Parmenidean reading of the tragedy of social media

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In this paper I argue that the shifting grounds that digital communication technologies are ever more rapidly exposing us to, in terms of what constitutes reality, what constitutes time, and what constitutes the human in thought, can all be seen as manifestations of what Gorgias might call *apate*, or aesthetic deception (Grethlein, 2021). In Gorgias' theorisation of tragedy, the audience's intelligence is elevated through their willing suspension of disbelief, their willingness to go along with the story 'as if' it were true – they partake in deceit for an aesthetic purpose and so exercise what Grethlein (2021) calls a "special, culturally refined species of attention" (p. 19). In this sense, our choices to take part in doom-scrolling, to consume absurdist and non-absurdist generative AI content, and to embrace the deceptions of fake news and outrage-mongering expose our conceit in placing ourselves in the position of elevated audience at the performance of the tragedy of social media. We know social media is full of all forms of deception, but we nevertheless chose to immerse ourselves in it, confident of our elevated ability to harmlessly suspend our disbelief, to treat these deceptions as aesthetic confections that take us up, transport us. While we *can* (and by now countless scholars have done so) choose to regard this realm of deception as something to educate and counsel against, I will explore alternative accelerationist, neo-Parmenidean approach to this thraldom. The more filled our world of discourse is with deception, the more we might begin to recognise it as the *doxa* of Parmenides, false opinion with no connection to the truth of being. Parmenides' poem implies that it is only through an embodied revelation that we can realise the truth of being – so can this revelation be encouraged by an acceleration towards peak deception? Might an immersion in deception hasten the revelation that all discourse is deception?

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PHC04 Pasts and Futures: Polical Dimensions

PP 0392 From templates to AI-driven multiplication: Rethinking visual aura in contemporary web design

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This paper examines the concept of multiplication in visual communication design, with a particular focus on web design as part of a broader design history shaped by reproducibility, standardization, and automation. The study forms part of a doctoral research project investigating the evolution of visual communication in web design, particularly in relation to AI-generated content and human-centered design.

The theoretical foundation of the paper draws, among others, on the work of Walter Benjamin, especially his essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. Benjamin argues that technological reproduction diminishes the "aura" of the artwork—its uniqueness, authenticity, and situated presence in time and space. While originally formulated in relation to photography and film, this concept offers a productive framework for examining contemporary design practices characterized by repetition and scalability.

The paper argues that multiplication in design did not originate with artificial intelligence but can be traced back to the emergence of templates, modular systems, and standardized visual solutions in graphic and web design. Templates introduced efficiency and consistency while simultaneously reshaping the role of the designer, shifting authorship from singular creation toward recombination and adaptation. Web design, from its early days, has relied heavily on such structures, making it a particularly relevant field for examining the cultural and aesthetic implications of multiplication.

This logic of reproduction is further intensified by AI-driven website generators such as Wix ADI, Framer AI, and Webflow AI. These systems automate not only layout creation but also visual hierarchies, typography, and content structure, relying on learned design patterns and large-scale data. As a result, multiplication becomes algorithmic rather than mechanical, raising new questions about originality, visual diversity, and experiential depth.

The paper addresses the following research questions: Does AI-driven multiplication in web design further erode visual uniqueness, or does it represent a transformation of authenticity rather than its loss? Can AI-generated interfaces still facilitate human-oriented, meaningful visual experiences, or do they primarily result in functional, homogenized solutions? And how does the role of the designer evolve within template-based and AI-assisted environments?

By situating AI-generated web design within a longer theoretical trajectory of multiplication in design, this paper contributes to debates in visual communication, design theory, and philosophy of communication. It proposes that the question of "aura" in digital design is not solely technological but deeply connected to design intent, contextual framing, and human interpretative practices.

PHC04 Pasts and Futures: Polical Dimensions

PP 0393 The paradox of communication: Memory, difference, and the problem of the common

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This paper reconsiders the relation between communication, memory, and understanding through the lens of cultural semiotics, theories of multimodality – taking the work of Juri Lotman as its central theoretical reference. Against the dominant assumption in communication theory that the aim of communication is mutual understanding, the presentation advances a different claim: communication does not primarily seek understanding but rather sustains itself as a process, with understanding emerging – if at all – as a contingent by-product. This shift has significant implications for how we conceptualize memory, subjectivity, and the political horizon of communication in digitally mediated cultures. The argument begins with Lotman's metaphor of the dream, where the dream appears as a primordial form of communication marked by polylingualism and semiotic uncertainty. For Lotman, the dream inaugurates culture by introducing a pause between impulse and reaction, a space in which memory, translation, and meaning become possible. The dream is thus not a narrative structure but a topological field of coexisting semiotic potentials – a "reserve of uncertainty" that demands interpretation without guaranteeing correctness. The paper proposes that contemporary digital memory environments function in an analogous way: as fields of accumulation and circulation in which storage and transmission converge, and where meaning is continuously generated through recombination rather than stabilized through narrative closure.

Building on this analogy, the paper introduces the concept of *mnemo-modulation* to describe a condition in which memory operates less as retrospective organization and more as ongoing modulation within algorithmically mediated communicative flows. Drawing on Lotman's distinction between gradual cultural evolution and explosive moments of semiotic transformation, it is argued that the contemporary digital condition normalizes explosion itself. Cultural "explosion" no longer resolves into a new stable order; instead, it becomes a permanent state, driven by accelerated intersemiotic translations of multimodal artefacts. Communication intensifies, while shared frames of understanding recede. This situation foregrounds a paradox already identified by Lotman: the value of communication increases with the difficulty of translation between distinct semiotic spheres. The more alien spheres involved, the more informative – and disruptive – the communicative act becomes. In digital environments, this tendency is amplified structurally, privileging the proliferation of communication over the consolidation of common meaning. The result is a form of collective communicative intensity without shared understanding, reshaping memory, publicness, and political subjectivity.

By reframing digital memory through cultural semiotics, the presentation contributes to philosophy of communication debates on trust, understanding, and the normative assumptions embedded in liberal-democratic models of communication. Rather than diagnosing the present solely in terms of loss or deficit, it argues for a semiotic re-description of contemporary communication as a field of modulated memory and ongoing translation, in which the question is no longer how understanding can be restored, but how communication continues to generate meaning in the absence of stable common ground.

PHC04 Pasts and Futures: Polical Dimensions

PP 0394 "Become the CEO of your own body": Biohacking and the new care of the self

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Contemporary biohacking discourses increasingly frame self-care as a managerial task in which individuals are called upon to optimize their bodies, attention, and performance through media technologies. Popular biohacking literature condenses this imperative in slogans such as "Become the CEO of your own body" (Breitfeld 2025), articulating a broader transformation of self-relations under conditions of digital capitalism. Biohacking thus emerges as a cultural formation in which care, optimization, and control converge.

This contribution investigates how biohacking operates as a media-based technology of subjectivation that reconfigures the Foucauldian *care of the self* into a data-driven regime of self-management. Central questions concern how biohacking texts conceptualize the relationship between body, media technologies, and subjectivity; which communicative and

technological practices are mobilized to govern the self; and how ethical self-care is transformed into a neoliberal imperative of optimization and responsibility.

The theoretical framework draws on Michel Foucault's analyses of governmentality (Foucault 1978; 1982) *technologies of the self*, and the *care of the self* (Foucault 1986; 2007). Whereas ancient practices of self-care aimed at ethical self-formation and the cultivation of a way of life, contemporary biohacking reframes self-relation as continuous self-monitoring and performance management. This shift resonates with Ulrich Bröckling's concept of the *entrepreneurial self*, which describes neoliberal subjectivity as a permanent project of self-investment, responsibilization, and optimization (Bröckling 2007), as well as with Gilles Deleuze's notion of control societies characterized by continuous modulation, data flows, and self-regulation (Deleuze 1992). From a media-theoretical perspective, Bernard Stiegler's theory of grammatisation and attention helps to conceptualize biohacking technologies as dispositifs that externalize cognitive and bodily processes, rendering subjectivity calculable and governable (Stiegler 2010). Wearables, tracking apps, and dashboards function as interfaces that reorganize attention and translate self-care into algorithmic self-administration. Read against Jung's distinction between ego and non-conscious dimensions of the self, biohacking appears as a practice that privileges visible, communicable, and data-readable aspects of subjectivity, while structurally marginalizing non-transparent dimensions (cf. Jung 1968).

Methodologically, the analysis follows a qualitative discourse-analytical approach inspired by Foucault. Selected passages from biohacking books by Andreas Breitfeld and Stefan Wagner are examined as communicative artifacts that address readers as self-governing subjects. Four analytical dimensions structure the analysis: body discourse, media and technology discourse, self-relation and governmentality, and the economization of self-care. Biohacking appears, in this reading, as a media-based reconfiguration of the care of the self in which ethical self-formation is displaced by managerial self-governance. Situated at the intersection of media and communication studies and philosophy, this perspective contributes to critical debates on self-tracking, datafication, and the transformation of self-care in contemporary control societies.

PHC04 Pasts and Futures: Polical Dimensions

PP 0395 Revisiting Marx in the age of new media: Media alienation, digital subjectivity and the struggle for agency in platform capitalism

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Marxist media criticism acquires renewed relevance in an environment where algorithmic governance and platform infrastructures increasingly mediate perception, relation, and agency. Rather than treating media as a secondary element of the ideological superstructure, the discussion foregrounds alienation as a lived and embodied condition. Classical motifs—alienated labor, commodity fetishism, and the inversion of subject and object-reappear today in forms shaped not by the factory but by the interface, the feed, and the logic of data extraction. Platform capitalism thus generates multi-level alienation that is not only economic or institutional, but ontological, experiential, and intersubjective.

Methodologically, the analysis proceeds through critical phenomenological inquiry, attending to how digital communication environments reorganize the Lebenswelt and modulate the grounds upon which subjectivity becomes possible. Alienation is examined not as a metaphor but as a mode of being-in-relation that is prefigured by infrastructure. This conceptual investigation is situated through indicative case vignettes-algorithmic visibility and its asymmetries; monetization pressures within influencer economies; and platform-dependent news encounters in moments of public crisis. These cases are not deployed as evidence in a positivist sense but as phenomenological apertures that expose how users are acted upon, formatted, and rendered legible to systems that exceed their intentional control.

The findings reveal three intertwined forms of media alienation:

First, experiential alienation, where digital routines and data-driven personalization produce a mode of perception shaped by platforms rather than by intentional agency, weakening the ability to inhabit one's own experience.

Second, technological alienation, where infrastructures such as recommendation systems and content moderation algorithms operate as quasi-autonomous forces, absorbing judgment and decision-making and rendering users dependent on machinic rationality.

Third, intersubjective alienation, where communicative practices within social media environments encourage instrumentalized interaction and dehumanized relations, reducing others to data points, audiences, or monetizable attention.

In response, we proposes a shift from media critique as institutional reform to media critique as phenomenological praxis: reclaiming the primacy of the human not through rejection of technology, but through cultivating forms of mediation that affirm agency, reciprocity, and the opacity of the other. This perspective reframes media not as a neutral interface but as a condition of experience, requiring ethical responsibility in the design and governance of digital systems.

Bridging Marxist political economy with critical phenomenology clarifies how alienation is reconfigured under platform capitalism, and why the struggle for subjectivity—rather than access, literacy, or participation alone—constitutes a central problem for twenty-first-century media theory. The horizon implied is not the restoration of a pre-digital subject but the cultivation of forms of mediation in which technology serves the human, rather than consuming it.

PHC04 Pasts and Futures: Polical Dimensions

PP 0396 Trusting the past? Memory, narrative, and the hermeneutics of artificial intelligence

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This paper investigates the conditions under which trust in the past remains possible in an age increasingly shaped by digital and algorithmic systems of communication. While historiography has always relied on mediations—archives, narratives, documents, and interpretive frameworks—the emergence of artificial intelligence introduces a qualitatively new form of mediation, one that challenges not only historical knowledge but the very hermeneutical relation between past, present, and future. The central question guiding the paper is therefore the following: *to what extent can we still trust that the past has actually happened as it is narrated and communicated today?*

Drawing on Paul Ricœur's philosophy of memory, narrative identity, and historical reference, the paper conceptualizes trust in the past as a fragile and ethically charged achievement. For Ricœur, historical knowledge is neither a direct access to past events nor a free linguistic construction; it emerges through a mediated process in which testimony, narrative configuration, and critical distance mutually correct one another. Trust, in this sense, is inseparable from responsibility: it presupposes identifiable interpreters, contestable interpretations, and a shared horizon of meaning in which claims about the past can be challenged and revised.

The contemporary digital communication environment profoundly destabilizes these conditions. Algorithmic systems and generative AI increasingly participate in the selection, organization, and re-description of historical materials, often with an appearance of immediacy and objectivity that conceals their interpretive operations. Building on recent developments in digital hermeneutics, particularly Alberto Romele's Ricœur-inspired account, the paper argues that AI systems function as *quasi-interpreters*: they do not merely transmit historical narratives but actively pre-structure the field of interpretation through data selection, pattern recognition, and narrative recombination. Unlike human interpreters, however, these systems lack experiential belonging, temporal situatedness, and ethical accountability. As a result, interpretation risks becoming opaque, automated, and detached from reflexive awareness of its own conditions.

This transformation recalls the dystopian logic articulated in George Orwell's *1984*, where the past is continuously rewritten through linguistic manipulation. Yet the danger today lies less in overt falsification than in the erosion of interpretive responsibility. When historical narratives are generated or modified without clear attribution, contestability, or narrative accountability, trust in the past collapses into either radical skepticism or uncritical reliance on machine-generated objectivity. In both cases, the communicative bond between past and present is weakened.

The paper concludes by proposing a normative reorientation of philosophy of communication toward the ethical governance of technological mediation. Trust in the past can be sustained only if human agency remains central in the interpretive process, preserving narrative plurality, critical distance, and responsibility for meaning. Artificial intelligence, from a hermeneutical perspective, must therefore be understood not as a substitute for historical interpretation, but as a powerful medium whose interpretive effects demand explicit philosophical, ethical, and communicative scrutiny.

POL01 TikTok and Embodied Political Performance

PP 0025 Platform governance, emotion, and extremism: A TikTok-Centered model of political Communication. Evidence from Romania

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Despite being a central infrastructure for political visibility, researchers are still struggling to explain how TikTok architecture reshapes ideological conflict, leaving an important theoretical direction unexplored. Following approaches from affective publics and algorithmic governance theories, this paper argues that (politicial) polarization on TikTok is not only a reflection of societal division, but also a phenomena produced due to the platform's architecture. Thus, this paper aims at examining how TikTok's recommendation architecture shapes ideological polarization and facilitates the circulation of extremist discourse. More specifically, this paper analyzes how platform affordances and affective storytelling contributed to the emergence of two antagonistic political clusters: a sovereigntist-populist field and a pro-European-institutionalist one in the contest of the Romania's 2024–2025 presidential election, characterized by a campaign disrupted by coordinated inauthentic activity and ultimately marked by the annulment of the first-round vote.

To test the formulated assumptions, the study adopts a mixed-methods design combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with computational network and content modelling. A dataset of 50 high-engagement TikTok videos (from a larger corpus of 50,000+ posts) was examined to identify the symbolic, emotional, and stylistic repertoires structuring each ideological camp. Network modelling based on shared hashtags (n = 1,037 nodes; 60,505 edges) used Louvain community detection and assortativity to measure polarization, while lexical analysis and logistic regression assessed how specific features (hashtags, sounds, engagement metrics) predicted the diffusion of extremist versus institutional narratives.

The results indicate an important feature: TikTok's multimodal affordances enable antagonistic ideological worlds to crystallize around emotionally charged repertoires. Sovereignist–populist narratives on the platform employ crisis framings and high-arousal affect, while pro-European–institutionalist messages rely on procedural legitimacy and ethos-based appeals.

Therefore, the paper offers at least two main theoretical contributions. First, it reconceptualizes polarization as infrastructural: ideological distance becomes encoded into network structures and visibility logics, rather than emerging solely from attitudinal predispositions. Second, it advances multimodal political communication theory by demonstrating how short-form storytelling acts as core mechanisms of meaning construction. Overall, the study reframes TikTok not merely as a distribution channel for political content but as a political system that co-produces ideological boundaries and democratic risk.

Keywords

TikTok; digital political communication; elections; algorithmic visibility; Sovereigntist; pro-European

POL01 TikTok and Embodied Political Performance

PP 0026 Trumpdancing on TikTok: Trends, performance, and political fandom

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This study investigates how embodied political performances circulate on TikTok as platform-native trends (Powers, 2025), focusing on the Trumpdance (Donald Trump's distinctive dance to the song YMCA) during the final month of the 2024 U.S. Presidential campaign. As Boffone (2022) has shown, TikTok is a dynamic environment where digital subcultures emerge and evolve, and it is not limited to entertainment but serves as an active space for the expression of cultural, social, and political identities. Indeed, TikTok can be understood as a performative media environment in which political communication is increasingly shaped by platform vernaculars, such as trends and challenges, privileging bodily imitation, repetition, and affective visibility. Within this environment, the body operates not merely as a vehicle of expression but as a central resource through which political meanings are enacted, negotiated, and circulated (Gerbaudo & Moreno, 2023). Drawing on theories of political fandom and imitation publics (Dean, 2017; Zulli & Zulli, 2022), the analysis frames participation in the Trumpdance as a form of ritualized, trend-based engagement in which users mobilize embodied performance to articulate affiliation, irony, or contestation into repeatable templates (Abidin, 2020). Through algorithmically driven circulation, these embodied templates enable the co-presence of support, critique, and playful appropriation, blurring the boundaries between political participation and cultural performance (Cervi & Divon, 2023). This aligns with the concept of 'political fandom,' where engagement with political figures involves elements theorized in media fandom, including productivity, affective sentiment, community, and contestation (Macnaughtan & Trott, 2024).

Against this background the following research questions arise:

RQ.1 How is the Trumpdance trend articulated on TikTok through both fan and counter-fan practices?

RQ.2 How do different practices and performances contributing to the Trumpdance trend differ in terms of visibility and interactions on TikTok?

Methodology

Through TikTok Research API we collected a dataset of 6,799 videos tagged with Trumpdance-related keywords and hashtags between October 5 and November 6, 2024. A stratified daily sample of the 20% most-viewed videos (1,347) was analyzed by two trained coders and subjected to multiple correspondence analysis and hierarchical clustering to identify distinct participation streams. Negative binomial regression models were used to test the relationship between cluster-defined practices and engagement metrics (views and comments).

Results

Results reveal six distinct streams of participation ranging from from ritualized affirmations of political belonging, to critical re-mediations, and to playful or depoliticized appropriations, demonstrating that the Trumpdance trend has been simultaneously approached as an object of political fandom, a discursive resource, and a performative template. Interestingly, videos that remediate offline rally performances achieve the highest visibility, indicating that offline-produced spectacle continues to shape algorithmic distribution, thus reinforcing the relevance of the territorial dimension of the campaign (Chadwick, 2013) also for scrolling politics. By contrast, videos oriented toward reinterpretation and critique attract greater discursive engagement but lower overall reach. Not fully aligned with expectations derived from the concept of imitation publics, our sample shows that user reenactments of the Trumpdance function predominantly as sites of identity expression rather than as a primary trigger of large-scale diffusion.

POL01 TikTok and Embodied Political Performance

PP 0027 Populist communication strategies on TikTok: Party differences and engagement effects in the 2025 German Federal Election campaign

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Populist communication has become a salient feature of political discourse on social media, particularly on TikTok, where algorithmic amplification, personalization, and short, emotionally charged video formats shape political visibility and user engagement. Research suggests that populist are especially successful in such environments, as platform affordances favor simplified messages, affective appeals, and identity-based communication, enabling them to disproportionately reach younger and less institutionalized voter. This dynamic was particularly visible in Germany during the 2025 federal election campaign, when populist parties gained notable attention and electoral support among younger voters (Jost et al., 2025).

Populist communication is characterized by comprising ideological core messages—people-centrism, anti-elitism, exclusion—and characteristic stylistic features such as negativity, emotionalization, and sociability (Ernst et al., 2019; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). These elements may occur independently or in combination and are commonly assumed to activate emotional and evaluative responses that foster political attention and engagement in digital environments (Jost et al., 2020). Thus, TikTok constitutes a relevant context for examining how populist parties employ populist communication strategies and whether these translate into higher user engagement.

Empirically, the study applies a quantitative content analysis of TikTok videos published by major populist parties in Germany (AfD, Die Linke, BSW) during the hot phase of the 2025 federal election campaign (January 12 to February 23, 2025) from twelve official party and leading politician accounts (N = 296). Unit of analysis is the individual TikTok video, operationalized through transcribed spoken content generated using OpenAI's Whisper speech-to-text model and subjected to AI-assisted text classification. All transcripts were manually checked, and the validity of automated classifications was assessed using theory-based validation procedures. The analysis captures populist key messages (people-centrism, anti-elitism, exclusion) and stylistic features (negativity, emotionalization, sociability), which were linked to a normalized engagement index based on platform metrics (Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2014).

Results show that populist key messages occurred in 20% of all videos, with clear party-specific patterns. AfD relied most heavily on populist content (56%), compared to BSW (10%) and Die Linke (11%). Thin populism and anti-elitism dominated overall, while exclusionary messages were rare and ideologically structured along party lines, reflecting distinct strategic emphases in party communication on TikTok. Party differences were statistically significant ($\chi^2(10) = 85.51$, $p < .001$, Cramér's V = .38). Populist stylistic features appeared more frequently—especially negativity (41%) and emotionalization (45%)—whereas sociability cues remained rare (13%) and showed no systematic party differences. However, neither populist key messages nor stylistic features were associated with higher engagement rates.

Overall, the findings indicate that populist parties differ markedly in their use of populist communication strategies on TikTok, but these strategies do not systematically enhance user engagement. This suggests that populist success on the platform is likely driven by other content characteristics or platform-specific features beyond populist messaging itself. Methodologically, conclusions are constrained by the limits of content-analytic approaches, including the abstraction of complex communicative cues into predefined categories, partial automation of coding, and the focus on spoken content and aggregate engagement metrics.

POL01 TikTok and Embodied Political Performance

PP 0028 Gendered body representation in political TikTok videos: A cross-national comparison of Norway and Romania

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As political communication shifts toward visual social media platforms, understanding how politicians present themselves through embodied cues becomes essential. While research demonstrates that male and female politicians face different evaluative standards (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993) and that body language conveys gendered social information (Neumann et al., 2022), the embodied dimensions of digital political messaging remain understudied. This study examines gendered patterns in body orientation and body emphasis in political TikTok videos across two distinct electoral contexts: Norway and Romania.

Drawing on 1,036 videos collected during the 2025 Norwegian parliamentary election and the 2025 Romanian presidential election (Norway *N* = 304; Romania *N* = 732), we use state-of-the-art computer vision methods to systematically analyze body presentation patterns at scale. Videos were sampled from verified accounts of political parties, party leaders, and presidential candidates across the ideological spectrum. We use YOLOv11 for pose detection and skeletal keypoint analysis, and OpenAI's CLIP model for gender classification. Body orientation is classified as frontal, side, or back-facing based on body width-to-height ratios and facial visibility metrics. Body emphasis is categorized as full body, upper body, lower body, or close-up, based on the visibility patterns of key skeletal points.

This comparison leans into the "most different systems" approach (Przeworski & Teune, 1970), which contrasts the highly gender-egalitarian Norway (with 45% female parliamentary representation) with the more traditionally gendered Romania (with 22% female representation) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). Additionally, with different political systems in place, comparing the role of the individual politician in a parliamentary and a presidential election can provide further insights into the supposed individualized nature of social media campaigns (Karlsen & Skogerbø, 2015). Preliminary analyses demonstrate substantial cross-national variation. Romanian videos averaged Romanian political content received eight times more engagement (avg. 317,705 views; 23,616 likes) compared to Norwegian videos (40,513 views, 2,773 likes)--suggesting different platform reach or content strategies. A pilot analysis of 100 videos per country shows that women appeared as the central person in 31% of Norwegian videos compared to 18% of Romanian videos. Body orientation patterns show that women politicians predominantly used front-facing presentations in both countries (Norway: 89%, Romania: 84%), with men showing somewhat lower front orientation rates. Notably, Norwegian women exhibited the lowest side-orientation rates (8.1%), while Romanian women used side orientation nearly twice as frequently (15.2%).

Body framing choices also showed cross-national variation: Norwegian women predominantly used upper-body framing (90.4%) with minimal full-body shots (8.2%), while Romanian women used full-body framing more frequently (28.2%). The full analysis will employ multilevel regression models to test whether body presentation features predict audience engagement differently by politician gender, while controlling for follower count, hashtag use, video duration, and ideological position. This research extends body language scholarship beyond hand gestures to broader embodied self-presentation, addresses calls for cross-national research on gendered communication patterns (Neumann et al., 2022), and demonstrates how automated visual analysis can contribute to investigating the gendered visual representation on social media.

POL02 Generative AI and the New Visual Politics

PP 0020 Who speaks for politics now? The disruptive potential of artificial Intelligence in identifying new actors within the digital political communication ecosystem

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The political communication ecosystem is currently experiencing an accelerated phase of transformation driven by the rapid diffusion of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and their capacity to reshape all stages of the communicative value chain. Within the broader framework of computational politics (Tufekci, 2014), AI-driven systems are not merely enhancing existing practices but fundamentally altering the roles, capacities, and power relations of both established and emerging actors. This study examines the disruptive and structural implications of AI for the identification and redefinition of actors operating within the digital political communication ecosystem.

The analysis focuses on how AI reconfigures traditional forms of political mediation and introduces new modes of agency that challenge established understandings of authorship, responsibility, and legitimacy in political communication. In this context, political actors, communication professionals, platforms, and audiences increasingly interact with automated systems that generate content, optimize strategic decisions, and shape the visibility and circulation of political messages. These developments give rise to new professional profiles and hybrid actors—such as algorithmic advisors, automated

content generators, campaign bots, and data-driven intermediaries—whose influence extends across electoral campaigning, agenda-setting, and political persuasion.

Conceptually, the study draws on the theory of techno-economic ecosystems (Mercan & Götkas, 2011; Vasconcelos et al., 2016; Barykin et al., 2020) as an interdisciplinary framework capable of capturing the systemic and relational effects of technological innovation. This approach enables the analysis of political communication as an ecosystem in which technologies, actors, value logics, and institutional arrangements co-evolve. AI is thus examined not as a neutral tool but as a structuring force that redistributes resources, reshapes dependencies, and transforms the balance of power within the ecosystem.

Methodologically, the research applies a functional–structural analysis to map the AI-driven political communication ecosystem in a systematic and relational manner. This mapping identifies productive and non-productive actors, their functions, technological interfaces, and mutual dependencies. Beyond descriptive classification, the analysis examines how communicative power is organized and exercised, which actors gain or lose influence through automation, and how AI mediates, amplifies, or constrains political interaction.

The study contributes to political communication scholarship in two main ways. First, it offers a conceptual and analytical model for understanding the reorganization of communicative power in the algorithmic age. Second, it proposes a typology of actors based on their capacity for intervention, mediation, or resistance vis-à-vis automated processes. Overall, the research advances a structural understanding of the contemporary political–digital ecosystem, highlighting the dynamic interplay between human agency and algorithmic agency as a defining feature of political communication in the age of Artificial Intelligence.

POL02 Generative AI and the New Visual Politics

PP 0021 Political beliefs or trust in AI: What affects the perception of AI-generated responses about migration

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Being used by millions of people worldwide, AI chatbots such as ChatGPT are becoming a major source of information on various issues, including politics. However, with their capability to quickly generate answers to user questions and high anthropomorphism, such tools affect the way political information is perceived. For instance, recent research shows that AI chatbots, on the one hand, can be particularly persuasive in the electoral context, and, on the other hand, can increase attitude extremity. Furthermore, AI chatbots provide high personalization and are prone to sycophancy—behavior in which a model tends to agree with the user even if it comes at the cost of information accuracy. These factors have the potential to amplify politically motivated reasoning, which occurs when individuals interpret new information in line with their ideology and existing beliefs. Yet, little research has been done on the relationship between motivated reasoning and AI chatbot use.

In this preregistered online experiment with 591 Swiss participants, I examined whether users evaluate AI-generated responses about a contested political issue—migration—according to their political beliefs. Specifically, I tested whether participants found AI responses more trustworthy and objective and agreed with them more when these outputs were consistent with their attitudes. I found that motivated reasoning, indeed, affected the perception of AI responses in terms of agreement and perceived objectivity, whereby participants tended to rate outputs more favorably if they were aligned with their migration beliefs. This result was additionally confirmed using other measures of political orientation, such as political leaning and the propensity to vote for the Swiss right-wing political party SVP.

This study also shows a nuanced role of cognitive factors in the perception of AI responses on political issues. In particular, I found that a preference for effortful thinking amplified motivated reasoning, although overall it had a negative effect on perceptions of AI responses. In other words, while more analytical individuals were generally critical of AI responses, they also accepted these responses more easily, as soon as they aligned with their beliefs. By contrast, higher levels of intuitive thinking in some cases reversed the effects of motivated reasoning.

Finally, I demonstrate that perceptions of AI responses are largely driven by attitudes toward AI. Specifically, users who considered AI chatbots a credible information source and reported a higher understanding of how they work tended to judge specific responses more favorably in all aspects. Importantly, AI attitudes affected the perceptions of AI responses independently of their ideological congruency and had more consistent effects than motivated reasoning. This suggests that users who strongly rely on AI chatbots may trust their responses even if they contradict their own political views.

POL02 Generative AI and the New Visual Politics

PP 0022 Visualizing harm: The effects of AI-generated political attacks

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Political disagreement has traditionally been articulated through verbal criticism and argumentation. Increasingly, however, political actors and their supporters rely on technical means to produce visual representations that depict adverse outcomes

they wish upon political opponents. Advances in generative AI have intensified this practice, enabling a wide range of actors to create images portraying political adversaries as humiliated, arrested, hospitalized, or dead.

Rather than engaging directly with an opponent's arguments, politicians and their supporters stage imagined consequences and circulate them on social media. Highly visible examples include portrayals of Donald Trump (U.S.) crying in public or being taken into custody, William Ruto (Kenya) resigning or depicted in a coffin, and Vladimir Putin (Russia) shown as imprisoned. These depictions thus span a continuum from mild portrayals (e.g., sadness), through moderate forms (e.g., arrest), to extreme depictions involving illness or death.

Despite the growing visibility of this emerging genre—here termed *symbolic-harm depictions*—little is known about its effects on citizens or how these effects vary with the severity of the harm portrayed. Research on negative campaigning and political incivility suggests that such variation in severity should matter, as negativity can either persuade or backfire depending on how it is perceived by audiences.

To investigate these dynamics, we conduct a web-based experiment in Austria (planned $N = 240$). Participants are randomly assigned to one of four conditions: low symbolic harm, moderate symbolic harm, high symbolic harm, or a neutral control condition. In all experimental conditions, participants are exposed to selected items from the X feed of a fictitious local politician. The first fifteen posts are neutral in nature, while the final post is a repost of content originally shared by another user, which the politician appears to endorse by adding the comment, "Pichler might want to reflect on what has driven public frustration to the point that people are sharing AI-generated images like this of him." The reposted content depicts symbolic harm directed at a political opponent, referred to as Stefan Pichler.

Severity is manipulated through the outcome depicted (low, moderate, high). The control condition features an otherwise comparable repost containing neutral content. The study examines effects on citizens' evaluations of both the sponsoring politician and the targeted opponent, operationalized through attitudes, emotional responses, and voting intentions.

A pretest and manipulation check are underway. We are in the process of pre-registering the main study on OSF. Data collection will be carried out by a professional survey provider (Dynata) in March; funding has been secured.

We pose four main hypotheses. First, increasing severity of symbolic harm is expected to reduce evaluations of the sponsor. Second, severity may simultaneously increase evaluations of the target by eliciting sympathy. Third, we expect backlash against the sponsor to be stronger when the symbolic harm is perceived as excessive. Fourth, target benefits are expected to be conditional, emerging primarily when the depiction is perceived as excessive.

The study contributes to research on political incivility, negative campaigning, and AI-mediated political communication by examining how visualized symbolic harm shapes political evaluations.

POL02 Generative AI and the New Visual Politics

PP 0023 Contested futures: Power, visibility, and AI-generated political imagination in post-uprising Iran

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Political imagination plays a central role in how social movements envision future transformation. The emergence of AI-generated visual technologies promising new possibilities for enabling and visualizing imagined futures calls for critical examination of how such imaginaries mediate political futures, particularly in contexts of political and social transformation. This study examines how AI-generated visuals function as contested public spaces for visualizing alternative futures during and in the aftermath of moments of upheaval.

Taking Iran following the Women, Life, Freedom movement (WLF) of 2022–2023 as a case, this study analyses how competing political actors use AI-generated media to visualize divergent futures, asking whose imaginaries become visible through these mediated artifacts, what political vocabularies they draw upon, and how issues of power and visibility shape which imagined futures are legitimized and which are marginalized.

For decades, Iran's political environment has been marked by structural constraints on civic engagement and the systematic suppression of dissent. The WLF temporarily disrupted this order, opening hybrid spaces where new forms of visibility, solidarity, and political imagination emerged. After its suppression, digital spaces became platforms for imagining alternative futures of the nation—most visibly through AI-generated images and videos circulating across digital media platforms.

Drawing on Chiara Bottici's concept of imaginal politics, I approach AI-generated visuals as part of the imaginal sphere through which politics is mediated and practiced. Following Nataliia Laba, I treat them as socio-technical practices—not purely technical outputs, but part of broader cultural and social practices that shape meaning, identity, and collective memory. Rather than asking how these images are technically produced, I examine how they operate as cultural and political texts. Employing visual framing analysis, I analyse an archive of widely circulated AI-generated visuals on Instagram and X (Twitter) between 2022 and 2025, studying how they frame alternative political futures, what cultural and political choices shape them, and how they operate as social practices within broader discursive struggles.

The analysis reveals three distinct framings of Iran's imagined futures. First, *restoration and technonationalist modernity*, where WLF symbols are appropriated while the movement's feminist, grassroots and participatory character is

erased—futures imagined as elite-led transformation and neoliberal promises. Second, *pluralist yet depoliticized futures*, where diversity and social demands become visible as lifestyle and individual rights, but liberation is framed as the ability to live normally rather than collective power to reshape political and economic structures—the process of transformation and people's agency remain invisible. Third, *disciplined imagination*, where future scenarios are narrowed to restoration, collapse, or regime continuity, collective agency is systematically erased, and transformative possibilities are foreclosed while state narratives of order and chaos are reproduced. Across these framings, a pattern emerges: the radical feminist and transformative possibilities opened by WLF are symbolically invoked yet structurally erased. I argue that while AI-generated imaginaries enable diverse visions, actors with institutional backing achieve wide circulation, and dominant political vocabularies—not progressive alternatives—gain visibility. Power and visibility hierarchies determine which imagined futures gain circulation and legitimacy in moments of transformation.

POL03 Algorithmic Visibility and Cross-Platform Attention

PP 0132 From routine to campaign mode: Temporal dynamics of political communication on TikTok and Instagram

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Election campaigns have traditionally been understood as distinctive phases of heightened competition and strategic pressure, in which political actors intensify their communication efforts to maximize visibility and mobilization (Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2013). When viewed through the lens of digital platforms, however, this temporal distinction becomes less clear-cut. Digital platforms are often associated with a "permanent campaign," in which political actors seek continuous presence and engagement beyond formal election periods (Chadwick, 2017). Under these conditions, adaptation increasingly refers to platform-specific logics of visibility and distribution, shaped by algorithmic curation and user engagement (Klinger & Svensson, 2015). Against this backdrop, it remains unclear whether permanent campaigning leads to largely uniform communication over time, or whether election phases continue to constitute distinct moments that further restructure political communication on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (RQ).

This study examines longitudinal change in political short-video communication in the run-up to the 2025 German federal election. Drawing on a content analysis of 30,164 TikTok videos and Instagram Reels published by German parties and members of parliament between June 2024 and February 2025, we analyze how three dimensions of communication evolve over time: (1) established campaign strategies such as attacks and acclaims, (2) mobilization cues including calls to action and direct audience address, and (3) platform-specific affordances—conceptualized as technical and social opportunities that shape expectations of visibility and engagement (Nagy & Neff, 2015)—including performative practices such as dancing, interaction with embedded platform content (e.g., duets, stitches, and on-screen references), and the use of comment stickers to incorporate audience interaction into videos.

Video content was classified using a multimodal large language model (Gemini 2.5 Pro) based on structured prompts derived from a theoretically grounded codebook. A manually coded dataset (N = 1784) served as basis for the iterative prompt refinement and for validation (all F1-scores < .69). Temporal dynamics in communications strategies were assessed using segmented time-series analyses and multilevel regression models accounting for platform, party, and account-level heterogeneity.

The findings show that election proximity does not lead to a uniform intensification of all engagement-oriented features. While overall activity and mobilization cues increase sharply in the late campaign phase, strategic attacks peak earlier and subsequently stabilize. In contrast, the use of performative platform affordances follows a non-linear trajectory and remains comparatively restrained during the decisive phase of the campaign. This pattern suggests that political actors selectively activate platform affordances, balancing algorithmic incentives for visibility against considerations of strategic focus, credibility, and appropriateness under heightened electoral pressure (Bossetta, 2018; Jost, 2023).

Taken together, the study demonstrates that short-video campaigning is temporally structured rather than continuous. Even under conditions of platformized political communication, routine and election phases remain analytically distinct. While election proximity intensifies strategic communication and mobilization, it does not translate into an unrestricted uptake of platform-specific affordances. Instead, campaign periods are characterized by selective alignment with visibility-oriented logics and a cautious, constrained use of platform-native practices. By foregrounding temporal dynamics, the paper thus identifies clear limits to platform-driven campaigning in high-stakes electoral contexts.

POL03 Algorithmic Visibility and Cross-Platform Attention

PP 0133 TikTok's tribal drums in the Romanian Presidential elections – A multimodal analysis

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The surprising result of the 2024 presidential elections in Romania in the first round by an independent far-right candidate, to anti-fascist protests in major cities and a full vote recount followed by the annulment of the election and a complete

redo of the elections, brought TikTok's political influence potential into the limelight of European politics. On the platform, meaning is constantly reframed by how text, sound and image are sequenced and recontextualized, thus necessitating a multimodal approach of digital political communication. Drawing on the media ecology paradigm, this research employs Nabi's emotion-as-frames model and Tagg's musical communication model to explore the interplay of popular culture and political expression on TikTok. The analyzed dataset is comprised of 742 videos and metadata from the calingeorgescuoficial TikTok account, 1400 video metadata using aural meme templates and 150 videos using the most popular memetic sounds used to support Călin Georgescu. Quantitative analysis is used to analyze thematic patterns in textual messages, while a new proposed layered multimodal qualitative analysis model is employed to study meaning making through sound, image, video and intertextuality. Results show the use of a wide range of memetic sounds (from hip-hop and pop-folk to military marches and religious chants) to mobilize people dissatisfied with the establishment and galvanize "souveranist" sentiment around the candidate by offering a platform for communal performances of outrage, grievances, national pride, quasi-religious adoration, but also hope, activating the topoi of oppression and resistance. The visuals anchor emotions in diverse contexts, from everyday life to protests in TikTok's mediated reality, while the sounds construct affective publics as scripts for communal performances which feed the majority illusion. TikTok's memetic function is used to create "a complex ecology of users' imitation, affective attunement, and attention hijacking" (Bösch & Divon, 2024) through automated indexing and amplification based on users' previous engagement. The grievances of farmers and transporters, the military ethos, and especially the feeling of disenfranchisement of the sizeable Romanian diaspora are effectively hijacked through use of relatable memetic templates. The sounds used as memetic templates by supporters of the campaign attune to the identities of specific categories from which they emanated in previous months or years – the military, the police, the diaspora, the farmers, the transporters, the young etc. Support for the candidate is expressed through participation in memetic phenomena that use the official campaign sound or reuse sounds that were previously attached to rituals of passage, memorialization and nostalgia, participation in mobilization for a previous cause, a specific group identity, older or relatively newer anthemic "wake up calls".

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POL03 Algorithmic Visibility and Cross-Platform Attention

PP 0134 Fragile flows of attention: Temporal dynamics of political issue competition on TikTok across 27 European countries

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TikTok has rapidly become an important arena of political communication for politicians seeking to reach younger audiences, reshaping how political issues gain visibility and compete for attention. Unlike follower-based platforms, TikTok organizes visibility through algorithmically generated interest clusters (Gerbaudo, 2024), in which political actors compete by embedding their content into trending topics rather than addressing stable audiences. In this environment, hashtags function as strategic issue labels that position political content within algorithmic publics and enable politicians to enter, sustain, or redirect attention flows.

While existing research has documented politicians' adoption of TikTok and the platform's affinity with populist communication styles, it is still underresearched how issue competition evolves over time. In particular, it remains unclear how political issues, operationalized through politicians' hashtag use, interact dynamically: which issues gain momentum first, how sudden increases in attention to one issue reshape the trajectories of competing or adjacent issues, and how these temporal dynamics vary across national political contexts. Addressing this gap, this study examines the temporal structure of issue competition in politicians' TikTok communication across 27 European countries.

We draw on a dataset of 272,756 TikTok videos posted by national deputies of the 27 EU-member parliaments (6.359 MPs). For each country, we track the temporal evolution of the twenty most frequently used political hashtags and construct normalized time series of issue attention. Multivariate time-series models with Granger causality tests and impulse response functions are used to examine how attention to one issue shapes the trajectories of others over time, accounting for election-related periods as exogenous shocks.

Across countries, the results reveal that politicians' issue competition on TikTok unfolds through structured yet highly fragile flows of attention. Rather than forming stable issue agendas, attention concentrates temporarily around a small set of dominant issues and shifts rapidly in response to impulses from related topics. These fragile flows are characterized by asymmetric temporal dependencies: some issue labels consistently function as short-term attention hubs that trigger cascading responses, while others remain largely reactive and episodic.

These dynamics are most pronounced in issue domains associated with populist rhetoric. Hashtags related to migration, border control, internal security, geopolitical conflict, and cultural identity function as temporal catalysts, setting off self-reinforcing cycles of attention. Impulses in these issue areas generate escalating feedback loops in which attention becomes increasingly intense and tightly coupled. As a result, attention flows around these topics become heated and volatile, crowding out adjacent issues.

These patterns indicate that issue competition is prone to producing fragile and escalating attention structures. Such dynamics create conditions under which polarized interpretations are more likely to emerge, as algorithmic visibility repeatedly amplifies issue structures. Overall, the study advances an actor-centered, temporal perspective on issue competition by demonstrating that politicians compete for algorithmic attention on TikTok through fragile, rapidly shifting flows of issue escalation and displacement rather than through stable or isolated issue promotion.

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POL03 Algorithmic Visibility and Cross-Platform Attention

PP 0135 Algorithms, attention, polarization: Understanding the drivers of political visibility on Instagram during elections

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In recent years, the global rise of political polarization and the role of social media in shaping public discourse have become central themes in political communication research. While scholarship has extensively covered platforms such as X/Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok, a significant gap remains regarding the algorithmic amplification of political content on Instagram, specifically concerning its contribution to "destructive polarization". This form of polarization is defined as a communicative practice characterized among others, by a lack of deliberation, exacerbated space of extreme voices and erasure of complexities (Esau et al., 2024).

We used the 2024 São Paulo (Brazil) mayoral election — a contest involving nearly 10 million voters and marked by cycles of violence, disinformation, and court-ordered account suspension — to examine the interplay between political content and platform's attention dynamics during elections. We investigate how patterns of visibility evolve (RQ1) and what factors drive this visibility (RQ2) using a dataset of over 7,500 Instagram posts from five leading candidates during the campaign (August–October 2024).

We employed a three-step analytical approach. For RQ1, we conducted a changepoint detection on time-series data for views and engagement (likes and comments) followed by peak analysis. For RQ2, we utilized a negative binomial regression to estimate the predictors of visibility, controlling for likes and comments, candidate identity, content type, timing, follower count, and posting frequency.

The analysis reveals radical attention asymmetry. The PELT algorithm identified nine distinct temporal segments. For instance, during the initial phases of the campaign, a single candidate captured 90% of the views. Visibility peaks were identified by applying a threshold of two standard deviations above the mean for each specific segment. To illustrate, on Segment 4, a single candidate accounted for 170 visibility peaks, while his main competitors generated zero visibility peaks. In multiple segments, this same candidate captured 100% of peak-related views.

The regression results demonstrate that user engagement — specifically comments more than likes — and candidate identity are the strongest predictors of visibility. Both follower count and posting frequency had a limited or even significant negative explanatory impact on average visibility per post. Most temporal segments (specifically Segments 3 to 8) were significant negative predictors of visibility, indicating a general decline in average post reach as the race progressed. Regarding content type (Reels, photos, and carousels), the model indicates that carousels maintain a higher average baseline of visibility. When crossing the model's predictions with the peak analysis, we observed a dual-track algorithmic logic, where Reels act as the primary engine for extreme visibility, accounting for over 90% of the identified peaks.

These findings indicate that Instagram's architecture fuels destructive polarization by algorithmically incentivizing much space for a single voice. While the candidate's strategy of personal attacks and disinformation secured near-total attention hegemony, even when banned from the platform, his electoral defeat underscores a critical disconnect between algorithmic visibility and democratic consensus. We conclude that polarization studies must prioritize platform architecture, since these governance mechanisms enable a scale of amplification that may reflect a global systemic logic transcending specific political contexts.

POL03 Algorithmic Visibility and Cross-Platform Attention

PP 0136 Entertainment as gateway: How lifestyle influencers unlock political participation on TikTok

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Note: This is a Stage 1 Registered Report. Study is conducted January–June 2026.

The algorithmic architecture of TikTok has fundamentally transformed pathways to political participation. While research has documented the rise of "political influencers," we lack causal evidence on whether they truly empower citizens or merely amplify existing engagement. This pre-registered study investigates a counterintuitive mechanism: that entertainment-focused creators are not diversions from politics but essential gateways to it.

Theoretical Framework

We introduce the Parasocial Gateway Hypothesis, proposing that lifestyle influencers who sporadically "interlope" into political discourse mobilize the politically disengaged more effectively than dedicated Political News Influencers. Drawing on parasocial relationship theory, we argue that trust bonds established through non-political content (e.g. beauty tutorials, gaming streams, lifestyle vlogs) transfer to political advocacy, bypassing selective avoidance mechanisms that typically filter out overtly political material. Unlike News Influencers, whose political identity triggers defensive processing among the disengaged, Interloping Influencers leverage pre-existing affective trust to reduce resistance. This reframes entertainment consumption as preparatory infrastructure for political mobilization rather than its competitor.

Research Design

We conduct a longitudinal quasi-experiment tracking 300 influencers (100 Political News, 100 Interloping, 100 Pure Lifestyle controls) and approximately 55,000 new followers across the US and Germany. Using the TikTok Research API, we monitor users who begin following these influencers during January–March 2026, tracking behavior through June 2026. Influencers are classified using a manually validated multimodal BERT-based model analyzing video transcripts, captions, hashtags, and visual content to determine the proportion of political versus lifestyle content in their output.

Measurement

We operationalize political empowerment through four behavioral indicators: (1) political content creation (posting videos with political hashtags/topics), (2) active engagement (likes, comments, shares on political content), (3) network expansion (following new politically diverse accounts), and (4) cross-platform amplification (sharing TikTok political content to other platforms). All measures are captured via API at weekly intervals.

Causal Strategy

We use propensity score matching using pre-treatment covariates: prior political engagement frequency, following network composition, content consumption patterns, account age, and activity levels. Matched users who follow political influencers are compared to users following Pure Lifestyle influencers or no influencers. Difference-in-differences estimation isolates the causal effect of the follow event, controlling for time-varying confounds and platform-wide trends.

Hypotheses

H1 (Main Mobilization Effect): Following a political influencer causally increases users' active participation (posting, sharing, liking, and network expansion).

H2 (The Gateway Effect): Mobilization effects will be significantly stronger for users following Interloping Influencers compared to Political News Influencers, supporting the theory that trust transfer serves as a gateway for the less engaged.

H3 (Cross-National Moderation): Reflecting distinct political cultures, empowerment man ifests differently: US users will show increased behavioral expression (posting/sharing), while German users will show increased network diversity (following diverse accounts).

H4 (Dose-Response): Following multiple influencers creates a cumulative effect, strengthening the algorithmic feedback loop.

This study provides the first large-scale causal test of influencer-driven empowerment in algorithmic environments, challenging conventional boundaries between entertainment and political communication.

POL04 AI, Trust, and Authenticity in Political Information

PP 0127 The algorithm of anxiety: Deconstructing the link between populist sentiment and fear of artificial intelligence in Europe

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In the rapidly evolving landscape of technological advancement, Artificial Intelligence (AI) acts as a paradigm-shifting force that promises to revolutionize industries while simultaneously generating profound anxieties regarding job scarcity, privacy,

and inequality. These uncertainties create fertile ground for populist rhetoric, which often frames technological disruption as a conflict between the vulnerable 'People' and the detached 'elite', such as software developers and venture capitalists, who benefit from these systems. However, empirical evidence linking specific dimensions of populist sentiment to AI-related fear remains scarce, particularly in a comparative European context.

This paper addresses this gap by investigating the conditions under which populist attitudes exacerbate the fear of AI. We propose a theoretical distinction between 'outward-looking' populism (OLP), characterized by anti-elitism and hostility toward minorities, and 'inward-looking' populism (ILP), which centers on self-perception, specifically feelings of status deprivation and the need for protection.

To test these hypotheses, the study draws on a unique large-N dataset (N = 7,755) collected in 2023 across five European countries: France, The Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, and Romania. The data was gathered using an innovative online "political compass" Voting Advice Application (VAA), allowing for the analysis of policy preferences and political attitudes across a broad demographic spectrum.

Using a series of linear regression models, we assess the explanatory power of ILP versus OLP variables on the dependent variable: the belief that "Artificial Intelligence is harmful for humankind". Contrary to the expectation that fear of AI is primarily driven by hostility toward elites (OLP), our findings reveal that 'inward-looking' populism is a significantly stronger predictor. Specifically, 'status deprivation', the belief that one is being left behind or marginalized by the economy, emerges as a primary driver of technological anxiety.

These results suggest that fear of AI is not merely a product of conspiracy theories regarding how "others" use technology, but rather a reflection of personal helplessness and perceived social peripherality. By demonstrating that economic and social grievances are more potent than anti-elite rhetoric in fueling AI-related populism, this research offers critical insights for political communication scholars and VAA developers aiming to understand how public perceptions of emerging technologies are formed and how their negative effects might be mitigated.

POL04 AI, Trust, and Authenticity in Political Information

PP 0128 The perceived illegitimacy of epistemic authorities and expertise

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Contemporary digital information ecologies are rife with epistemic disputes, where common sense, alternative experts, and gut feelings seem to win the battle for legitimacy from expert knowledge and mainstream epistemic authorities– at least among segments of society that increasingly become distrusting of established institutions of knowledge. To understand how this contemporary battle for legitimacy and the status of epistemic authority is understood by citizens, this study maps the perceived (il)legitimacy of expertise and authoritative sources of knowledge vis-à-vis alternative modes of truth-telling.

Our paper aims to extend beyond established concepts of science-related or epistemic populism and post-truth repertoires. It also extends beyond "fake news" as a blame-shifting label assigned to journalists or established media. Hence, beyond the attack on scientific knowledge and news media versus the emphasis on people-centric knowledge, the delegitimization of expertise and epistemic authorities reflects a broader crisis of legitimacy related to the status of various authoritative sources of information. As case in point, radical right-wing populists who gained political power (i.e., Trump in the US, Wilders in the Netherlands) often cast doubt on epistemic authorities and experts by questioning the validity and honesty of empirical facts, or the independent status of experts and institutions of authoritative knowledge. Using the affordances of social media, and the resonance of hyper-partisan alternative media with delegitimizing narratives, these actors play a key role in mainstreaming the delegitimization of authoritative experts across domains.

As a major contribution to literatures on post-truth discourses and repertoires, the epistemic dimension of populism, and delegitimizing epistemic discourses, we suggest that contemporary digital societies and public opinion host a wider crisis of legitimacy that is reflected in the beliefs of disenchanted and distrusting citizens. Using representative survey data in contrasting country cases (the US and the Netherlands reflecting high and low polarization, respectively), we explore whether a wider perceived crisis of legitimacy related to authoritative expertise is mainly reflected among people who are disenchanted with politics, media and society. Are segments of society that distance themselves from democratic institutions most likely to question the legitimacy of authoritative expertise? The comparative survey captures the perceived illegitimacy of epistemic authorities, preferences for alternative sources of truth, and the extent to which citizens still care for the truth and facts. By assessing the correlates of the perceived illegitimacy of epistemic authorities, this study establishes the profile of citizens with alternative preferences for truth: Can we distinguish citizens who deem epistemic authorities and experts as illegitimate based on their media preferences, populist attitudes, and general levels of distrust in democratic institutions?

By mapping these profiles of perceived illegitimacy, this paper aims to make a contribution to the literature on democratic resilience and pathways to interventions in light of post-factual discourses, disinformation, and the erosion of the legitimacy of epistemic authorities. Hence, our findings on perceptions of (il)legitimacy can help to identify segments of the digital

audience that are no longer reached by epistemic authorities and help to tailor interventions related to disinformation to different preferences for truth and factual coverage.

POL04 AI, Trust, and Authenticity in Political Information

PP 0129 Are political opinion leaders still good for democracy? A cross-country study of political opinion leaders' media repertoires and trust in information sources in high-choice information environments with low/high polarization

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High-choice information environments and increased social information curation have reignited interest in political opinion leaders' (hereafter POLs) roles as intermediaries of information (Strömbäck et al. 2023). The term denotes ordinary citizens who share political information with others and attempt to influence their opinions (Lazarsfeld et al. 1948). Assuming they passed on quality information, their role in public opinion formation was traditionally conceptualized as normatively good, but this assumption does not necessarily hold today (Mangold & Bachl 2018): POLs may relay information from influencers, partisan alternative news media, and alternative social media like Telegram and Truth Social where misinformation and alt-right narratives circulate. This gives POLs potential to inform *or misinform* others (Strömbäck et al. 2023).

Prior studies of POLs' media diets predominantly focus on traditional news media and mainstream social media. We advance knowledge in three central ways.

1) We explore POLs' use of a *broader scope of information sources*, including professional *and partisan alternative* news media, mainstream *and alternative* social media, *and influencers*.
2) We investigate *what information sources POLs (do not) trust* (news media/social media/research).
3) We compare countries with high (US) and low (Denmark) media polarization. To our knowledge, this is the *first comparative study* of POLs' media diets.

We use survey data representative of the adult populations in the US and Denmark, collected February/March 2025 (N = 3980). We identify media repertoires using Latent Profile Analysis and investigate associations between media repertoires and political opinion leadership using OLS regression.

In both countries, we find a group of POLs that may be 'normatively good' for democracy. They rely on a media repertoire characterized by high (DK) or fairly high (US) use of professional news media, limited use of alternative news and alternative social media, relatively high trust in news media, and high trust in research. However, in both countries, we also find a group that may be 'normatively bad' for democracy. In the US, their media repertoire is characterized by use of Conservative news (Fox News, Breitbart), use of alternative social media, and low trust in news media and research; in Denmark, it is characterized by a mix of professional and alternative news media, high use of alternative social media, and relatively low trust in news media and research. These 'normatively bad' POLs may pass on low-quality information, extreme views, and negative sentiments towards professional news media and research. They constitute smaller parts of the population than the 'normatively good' POLs but might have greater impact on public opinion as additional findings show they participate more in political discussions. Contextual factors/differences are discussed in the presentation.

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POL04 AI, Trust, and Authenticity in Political Information

PP 0130 Do we trust politicians who let AI speak for them? AI-mediated communication, perceived authenticity and trust in politicians

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Recent technological developments have created widespread concern about the effects of artificial intelligence on trust in politicians. The use of generative AI as a tool in political communication has become widely accessible, yet the implications remain largely unexplored. This paper asks: How does AI-mediated communication by politicians affect public trust in these politicians? Literature on the effects of AI-mediated communication on trust and credibility is still emerging, with

context-dependent studies that yield divergent findings. It is crucial for society to understand how politicians' use of AI affects political trust, and whether it can serve as a legitimate communication tool, especially because trust constitutes the very foundation of cohesion in democratic societies.

Combining literature on AI perceptions, trust, and authenticity, we expect lower trust in politicians who post AI-generated content on Facebook. Authenticity is an important aspect of political communication and often functions as a carefully crafted performance, governed by an implicit "authenticity contract" between politicians and their audiences (Enli, 2015). This contract sets expectations about what content should appear genuine, and violations can damage trust. We expect that the publication of AI-generated texts challenges this contract, making politicians posting AI-mediated messages appear inauthentic and therefore trusted less.

We conducted an experiment with data gathered by Danish polling company Epinion through their representative panel (N = 507). Participants saw a Facebook post by a politician and were informed that the post was written by the politician themselves or by ChatGPT. After exposure, participants indicated their trust in the politician and the perceived credibility of the text.

The results show that AI-mediated communication diminishes trust in politicians and lowers credibility. When we exposed respondents to posts authored by a political staff member, trust levels did not significantly decline, indicating that the effect is specific to AI rather than due to outsourcing content writing in general. Mediation analysis confirmed that politicians who use AI are perceived as less authentic, and inauthentic politicians are judged as less trustworthy. Effects also varied by text type: impersonal AI-generated posts reduced trust, whereas personal posts did not. Our contribution is twofold: (1) demonstrating that decreases in trust are primarily driven by reduced perceived authenticity, and (2) advocating for a revised conceptualization of the public's perception of AI in political communication. While algorithms are often perceived as neutral, our study suggests growing public awareness of biases embedded in generative AI.

POL04 AI, Trust, and Authenticity in Political Information

PP 0131 New affordances, old patterns? GenAI for political information and news use

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Generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT are rapidly becoming integrated into everyday life. Their core affordances—hyper-personalization, intuitive dialogue-based interaction, and the ability to serve as a universal information gateway—have fueled hopes that GenAI might lower barriers to political information and news consumption. At the same time, they have sparked concerns that GenAI could displace journalistic news and becoming an opaque, biased, and unreliable (Augenstein et al., 2024; Motoki et al., 2024; Rudin, 2019) intermediary between citizens and political information. Yet, despite intense debate, little is known about how GenAI is used for political information and news.

This study provides one of the first population-level assessments of GenAI use for news, focusing on Germany in the run-up to the 2024 European Parliament elections. Conceptually, we build on affordance theory (Gibson, 2014) and contemporary discussions around inequality in news use (Betakova et al., 2024; Strömbäck et al., 2022) and ask, first, whether GenAI attracts those who typically consume little news or actively avoid it (RQ1). Second, we investigate whether GenAI use for political information is associated with reduced reliance on journalistic news sources (RQ2), thereby assessing fears of a displacement effect (Reisner, 2025).

Empirically, we draw on a representative online survey of the German population aged 16+ (N = 1,461), conducted in June 2024. The survey measures three distinct forms of GenAI news use (for general political information, as a substitute for news, and for election-related information), overall news consumption, intentional news avoidance, and the use of journalistic news sources. We employ multiple linear regressions to examine how patterns of news use and avoidance relate to GenAI news use, and whether GenAI is associated with the reduction of journalistic news use.

Our findings show that the mean usage of GenAI for news among GenAI users is low, and nearly two-thirds never use GenAI for this purpose. Controlling for socio-demographics and other covariates, low news consumption and intentional news avoidance are unrelated to GenAI news use. Instead, established predictors of news engagement such as political interest and media trust emerge as strong positive correlates of GenAI news use.

Addressing RQ2, we find no evidence that GenAI displaces journalistic news. On the contrary, Regression analyses confirm that GenAI use for news is positively, not negatively, associated with journalistic news use, even when accounting for political interest, media trust, and attitudes toward GenAI. In its current stage, GenAI thus appears to complement rather than replace journalistic news within the information diets of news-engaged citizens.

Overall, our results suggest that the affordances of GenAI have not yet translated into a fundamental disruption of existing patterns of news consumption. GenAI does not currently draw in low news consumers or news avoiders, nor does it crowd out journalistic sources. Given GenAI's rapid evolution and integration into major platforms, continued research is needed to track whether these patterns persist or change as the technology and its use mature.

POL05 Misinformation: Audience Perceptions and Resilience

PP 0236 Platform-specific patterns of deceptive content exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic: A comparative analysis of social media users

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Social media platforms have been identified as key drivers in the dissemination of misleading content (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Del Vicario et al., 2016; Nelson & Taneja, 2018). Consequently, individuals who rely on social media as a news source are more likely to encounter such content (Lecheler & Egelhofer, 2021; Tucker et al., 2018). However, social media platforms do not function uniformly in this respect. Platform architectures—including algorithmic curation, content moderation policies, and communication structures—shape information flows differently (Napoli, 2014; Thorson & Wells, 2016). These structural differences may produce varying levels of exposure to misleading content, warranting platform-specific analysis.

RQ1: Does the likelihood of encountering misleading content vary with the use of specific social media platforms?
RQ2: How do users exposed to misinformation differ from non-exposed users across platforms?

Based on survey data from Germany (n = 2,953) that captured attitudinal variables, media use patterns, and self-reported exposure to misleading content about COVID-19 (misinformation and/or conspiracy theories), we employed logistic regression analysis to identify differentiated associations across platforms.

The analysis reveals substantial variation in the strength of associations between platform use and exposure to deceptive content. YouTube usage showed the strongest significant relationship ($\beta = 0.158$, $p < 0.001$), followed by Telegram ($\beta = 0.127$, $p = 0.005$), WhatsApp ($\beta = 0.126$, $p = 0.001$), and TikTok ($\beta = 0.103$, $p = 0.008$). No significant effects emerged for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X), or other platforms examined.

Comparative t-tests between those exposed to deceptive content and non-exposed users revealed both common patterns and platform-specific nuances. A consistent finding across all platforms was significantly lower trust in established institutions (political institutions, science, traditional media) among those who encountered misleading content. The intensity of distrust varied considerably: Telegram users exposed to misinformation exhibited the lowest trust in political institutions ($M = 3.54$, $p < 0.001$) and science ($M = 4.21$, $p < 0.001$), while TikTok users showed the lowest trust in traditional media ($M = 4.27$, $p < 0.001$).

Political orientation distinguished users on some platforms: those encountering misinformation on YouTube, Telegram, and WhatsApp were significantly more right-leaning (all $p < 0.001$), most pronounced among Telegram users (M(exposed to deceptive content) = 4.17; M(not exposed to deceptive content) 3.67). Age differences emerged on TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp, with exposed users being younger (all $p < 0.05$).

These findings suggest that exposure to deceptive content during the pandemic followed platform-specific patterns associated with distinct user characteristics. The consistent erosion of institutional trust across all platforms highlights critical challenges for democratic discourse in digital environments. The pronounced association between right-leaning political orientation and misinformation exposure underscores the importance of examining how platform-specific affordances, in combination with user communities, structure political information ecologies. Future research should explicitly account for the differentiated affordances and architectures of social media platforms to develop platform-tailored strategies that strengthen institutional trust and foster informed political participation in fragmented media landscapes.

POL05 Misinformation: Audience Perceptions and Resilience

PP 0237 Testing network-based media literacy interventions against the spread of online misinformation: A simulation approach

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Misinformation poses a significant threat to democratic processes, public health, and evidence-based policymaking (Ecker et al., 2025). Media literacy interventions (MLIs) have proven effective in improving discernment between misinformation and factual content (Droog et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2024). However, their large-scale deployment on social media remains challenging due to high costs and difficulties in ensuring repeated exposure, which is crucial for their effectiveness (Huang et al., 2024; Roozenbeek et al., 2023). This study proposes a network-based targeting strategy to deploy MLIs more efficiently and cost-effectively, thereby addressing the limitations of random deployment or targeting based on scarce individual susceptibility data.

Drawing on a formalized network intervention framework (Valente, 2012), this study argues that strategically targeting users based on their relational position within social media follower networks can maximize the reach and impact of MLIs. The study first synthesizes three theoretical approaches to network targeting and then compares them, using suitable algorithmic implementations: the *Opinion Leader Approach*, providing interventions to influential opinion leaders with a large reach (Katz, 1957; Valente & Pumpuang, 2007), the *Weak Tie Approach*, targeting individuals that act as bridges

between different communities (Granovetter, 1973), and a *Combinatory Approach* that integrates multiple measures or objectives to mitigate biases inherent in single metrics (Bucur, 2020; Sekara et al., 2025).

To evaluate the cost-effectiveness of these strategies, we employ an agent-based modeling (ABM) simulation approach, a method well-suited for linking micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns in communication science (Smaldino, 2023; Squazzoni, 2008; Waldherr et al., 2021). The base model simulates the spread of online misinformation via sharing, incorporating agent-level mechanisms such as partisan bias, source trust, and belief updating, informed by existing computational models (e.g., Acemoglu et al., 2024; Rabb et al., 2022). This model will be documented using the ODD protocol to ensure transparency and replicability (Grimm et al., 2020).

The simulation experiments will first test the effectiveness of random MLI deployment, conducting a parameter sweep on the percentage of nodes receiving an intervention. These results will then be compared against various network-targeted deployments. Crucially, we introduce a cost function that penalizes targeting nodes with a very high number of ties (network hubs), allowing for a direct assessment of whether network interventions offer a genuine cost-benefit advantage. This study aims at identifying the most efficient strategies for containing misinformation spread with minimal resources. This research addresses recent calls for more simulation studies in misinformation intervention research (Spampatti, 2025) and contributes to developing scalable, theory-driven solutions for combating online misinformation.

POL05 Misinformation: Audience Perceptions and Resilience

PP 0238 Media trust as epistemic orientation: Rethinking susceptibility to misinformation

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Research on susceptibility to political misinformation often assumes that individuals evaluate claims in isolation, based primarily on cognitive ability, knowledge, or situational cues. Yet belief formation is inherently relational: judgments about truth depend on which actors are trusted as epistemic authorities. Media trust therefore positions individuals within the information environment prior to evaluation, shaping not generalized gullibility or skepticism but the selective allocation of credibility across competing narratives. Susceptibility to misinformation thus reflects a stable epistemic orientation alongside momentary evaluative judgments.

Study 1 examines this argument using survey data from Germany collected during the Russian invasion of Ukraine (N = 1,000). Study 2 replicates the framework across two political topics and extends it experimentally by testing whether baseline media trust conditions responses to fact-checking interventions (N = 1,275). Respondents assessed the truthfulness of pro- and anti-Russia as well as pro- and anti-migration claims. Using signal detection theory, we distinguish evaluative capacity (sensitivity), capturing individuals' ability to discriminate between true and false claims, from evaluative orientation (response bias), capturing systematic tendencies to judge claims as true or false regardless of their veracity. All analyses adjust for sociodemographic characteristics and topic-specific attitudes and involvement.

Across studies, media trust showed little association with sensitivity: individuals with higher trust in mainstream media were generally no better at distinguishing true from false claims. By contrast, media trust was systematically related to response bias. Higher trust predicted reduced skepticism toward claims aligned with mainstream media narratives (e.g., anti-Russia and pro-migration claims) and increased skepticism toward opposing claims. This pattern emerged consistently across topics and studies, indicating that media trust primarily shapes how credibility is allocated rather than how accurately information is evaluated. When response bias was aggregated across opposing narratives, these effects canceled out, demonstrating that media trust does not induce a general tendency to believe or disbelieve political information, but instead redistributes belief across narratives in line with perceived epistemic authority.

Study 2 further examines whether corrective information is more effective among individuals with higher trust in the media, given that fact-checks and corrections in the experiment predominantly originated from mainstream news outlets. Contrary to expectations, media trust did not moderate the effectiveness of corrective information. This null finding likely reflects the generally high and weakly dispersed levels of media trust in the sample, which constrain variation in epistemic skepticism, and suggests that corrective interventions may operate independently of generalized media trust when mainstream media function as a broadly accepted epistemic reference.

By integrating media trust into a signal-detection framework, this paper reconceptualizes susceptibility to misinformation as an outcome of trust-based epistemic alignment rather than isolated misjudgments. The findings underscore that media trust shapes which political claims are believed rather than how much political information is believed overall, with important implications for diagnosing misinformation vulnerability and designing corrective interventions.

POL05 Misinformation: Audience Perceptions and Resilience

PP 0239 Overwhelmed or biased? Exploring profiles of citizens based on their misinformation threat perceptions

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Citizens tend to overestimate both the prevalence of misinformation and its effects on others. While nuanced assessments of information are considered desirable, intense worries about falsehoods could cultivate generalized distrust (van der Meer et al., 2023). Especially heightened misinformation threat perceptions (MTPs) – the belief that misinformation will have severe, detrimental consequences – may have harmful implications for trust in media and politics.

Although people's perceptions of what constitutes misinformation differ, MTPs have often been treated as a unidimensional concept. We argue instead that MTPs are multifaceted, varying not only in their intensity but also in perceived threat objects. Building on earlier inductive research, we distinguish between MTPs regarding democracy, social cohesion, the information environment, and personal lives. To understand potential implications of these perceptions, it is crucial to investigate how MTPs manifest across individuals and what factors may play a role in shaping such manifestations.

To unravel MTPs, we set out to identify distinct profiles of citizens based on their MTPs across the different domains. This may shed light on who may under- or overestimate misinformation threats and which aspects of society might be more vulnerable to spillover effects of MTPs. Afterwards, we investigate how cognitive and ideological factors may explain membership to certain profiles. Additionally, to explore contextual factors, we test how the prevalence of the specific MTP profiles may change over the course of an election campaign.

This study investigates MTPs against the backdrop of the Dutch general elections on October 29, 2025. Given the Netherlands' comparatively high resilience to misinformation (Humprecht et al., 2020) it functions as a least-likely case, which makes investigating the *perceptual* dimension of misinformation threats particularly relevant. We use original data from a panel survey with a rolling cross-section design conducted between September 25, 2025, and November 4, 2025. A representative sample of N = 3400 Dutch citizens was randomly divided into 21 batches averaging n = 160. We will use Latent Profile Analysis to identify groups of citizens with distinct MTP patterns, and regression analyses to explore which factors may explain profile membership. Data analysis is expected to be completed by February 2026.

With this study, we contribute to misinformation research twofold: First, it advances our theoretical understanding of important subjective concerns about misinformation by conceptualizing MTPs as multidimensional and identifying factors that may explain variation. Second, it adds empirical evidence for the role of misinformation as a perceptual phenomenon within high-stake contexts by investigating MTPs during an election period. These insights can guide the assessment of potentially negative effects of disproportionate MTPs needed for a comprehensive understanding of misinformation's role in democratic societies.

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POL05 Misinformation: Audience Perceptions and Resilience

PP 0240 Information disorders in information-orderly societies: Identifying weak spots of informational resilience

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Information disorders such as misinformation, polarization, and hate speech are a pressing issue for democratic public debate in all societies (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018). Some societies, including the Scandinavian countries, have however proven to be more resilient to digital information disorders than others (Humprecht et al., 2020), which makes incidents of information disorders more sporadic and less widespread. Studying information disorders in such context poses both a risk of at the same time underestimating and overestimating the phenomenon: one finds little in comparison to other countries but keeps looking until something is found.

Instead of trying to gauge the absolute extent of information disorders, we argue that information disorders in these contexts are best approached through an identification of potential weak spots in societal informational resilience. Moreover, we add to existing research focusing on the resilience of organizations (e.g. Uusikylä et al., 2024) or individual citizens (Humprecht et al., 2023) to information disorders by focusing on the resilience of the digital public sphere. To do so, we

combine citizens' perceptions and self-reported behavior of engaging in the digital public debate with an analysis of (dis) information flows, news communities and topical patterns present in the digital information environment.

We seek to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How can we adequately measure and describe incidents of information disorder under "least likely" conditions of a highly resilient country context?

RQ2: Which potential weak spots in societal resilience to information disorders become manifest among citizens and in the digital information environment in a highly resilient country context?

To answer these research questions, we combine survey data with digital trace data. To measure citizens' perceptions, attitudes and self-reported digital behavior, we draw on representative survey data of 6,320 Danish citizens age 15 and above, collected in 2024. To trace digital information flows and other characteristics of the digital public debate, we map the Danish political information environment on Facebook, which here still represents the most widely used social media platform. We analyze about 21 million Facebook posts from 14.294 public pages and groups, published in the period August 2023 to August 2024. Facebook posts have been collected through a two-tier snowball sampling approach, with posts containing an URL to a Danish established or alternative news media outlet as the starting point.

We use these two data sources to develop and test indicators for weak spots in resilience of the digital public sphere, building on measures for the prevalence of digital misinformation, polarization, topical diversity, digital trust, digital (dis) connection, and citizens and stakeholders' engagement in the digital debate. These weak spots can, e.g., become manifest through diverging and conflicting attitudes and digital behavior between different sociodemographic groups, the formation of outlier segments detached from mainstream public debate, or the existence of information flows and conditions prone to the spread of misinforming or otherwise harmful content.

POL06 Cross-Platform News Exposure and Digital Trace Methods

PP 0231 Online political content 'in the wild': A street-intercept study of political exposure on social media across platforms, countries, and generations

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This study introduces an exploratory methodology to examine online political exposure on social media. We develop a street-intercept method that recruits participants in public spaces to perform a scrolling task and follow-up survey lasting no more than 15 minutes. For the scrolling task, participants open their preferred social media and scroll until they come across a post that they consider 'political'. A short follow-up survey combines open-ended responses with scaled items to capture contextual information such as participants' platform use, digital literacy, political interest, and efficacy.

While non-representative, the approach extends research into online political exposure in two key ways. First, outside of direct collaboration with social media companies, few methodologies directly assess how citizens are exposed to political content on social media. By directly observing and measuring citizens' scrolling behavior, we overcome existing challenges of recall in surveys (Haenschen, 2020), mock-up feeds in experiments (Sülflow, Schäfer, & Winter, 2019), and limitations to tracking online behavior within platforms (Clemm von Hohenberg et al., 2024).

Second and importantly, our design allows participants to self-define what counts as 'political'. This allows researchers to compare self-perceptions of politics across generations and national contexts. In most studies, researchers define political by phrasing survey questions or devising classifiers (e.g., Wojcieszak et al., 2024). Yet, alternative citizenship models point to different understandings of political (Kligler-Vilenchik, 2017), suggesting that political content online may not conform to one-size-fits-all operationalizations.

This study is a work-in-progress. The methodology has been piloted in Lithuania and Spain, and the authors will meet in March to finalize the methodology and produce training materials. As part of a wider COST Action network, we aim to recruit researchers and students in several countries to perform data collection in different cities to understand real-world patterns in: 1) frequency and timing of political exposure across platforms; 2) self-perceptions of 'political content' across young and old citizens; and 3) how these patterns converge or diverge across cities.

Understanding when—if at all—citizens are exposed to political content is particularly important due to recent platform changes. Although social media have become key sources of information for political news and commentary, platforms like Facebook and Instagram have recently taken steps to downrank the visibility of political content. In addition, our sampling approach specifically targets youth and the elderly, in order to assess whether these groups have different perceptions and exposure patterns of 'political' content (with older citizens privileging institutional/formal understandings and younger citizens more aligned with cultural/extra-parliamentary forms). We aim to run the data collection across several cities in parallel over a two-week period. Doing so allows us to probe for patterns and correlations across platforms, age groups, and national contexts.

At ECREA, we will present the final methodology alongside preliminary field insights into citizens' engagement and responsiveness to the scrolling task and survey.

POL06 Cross-Platform News Exposure and Digital Trace Methods

PP 0232 Mapping mobile news pathways: Investigating cross-platform news exposure via mobile in-app tracking

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In a functioning democracy, the normative expectation is that citizens stay informed to participate in political discourse. However, the way of news consumption has shifted. With the spread of smartphones, the device has become one of the main ways of accessing news in Germany (Hölig et al., 2020), allowing users to access news through various apps and social media platforms (Behre et al., 2025).

Most individuals use a banquet of pathways to inform themselves about politics (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012). Therefore we adopt a user-centered approach to conduct a comprehensive, cross-platform analysis of mobile news exposure. We address two key questions: (RQ1) What characterizes the political information environment on mobile platforms? and (RQ2) What factors predict exposure to such content? Our analysis focuses on three distinct pathways to news: News Apps (journalism-oriented), YouTube (mixed-length video), and TikTok (short-form video), allowing for a comparative view across different platforms.

The literature shows that individual characteristics such as socio-demographics or political interest, as well as news curation practices, influence how much news a person consumes (Merten, 2021). These news curation practices include the avoidance of news (e.g. Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2020), the belief that one can stay informed through peer networks and algorithmic curation without actively seeking news (e.g. Zúñiga et al., 2017), and a sense of duty to keep oneself informed (McCombs & Poindexter, 1983).

However, these studies are often based on self-reports, which is typically subject to recall bias (Parry et al., 2021). Therefore, We employ a mixed-methods design combining survey data with mobile in-app tracking as a more precise measurement of media usage (Stier et al., 2021). Data was collected between September 1 and September 21, 2025 and consists of 805 German participants. We utilized a commercial Android tracking application provided by murmuras that recorded app logs as well as in-app activity for TikTok and YouTube.

To ensure comparability across platforms and content formats, we defined the unit of analysis as the exposure per second. Given the journalistic focus of news apps, we consider the total usage of news apps to be relevant exposure. The content consumed within TikTok and YouTube was labeled as political or news related using a zero-shot classification (ModernBERT-large-zeroshot-v2.0 by Moritz Laurer).

To answer the first research question, we look at the distribution, the frequency, and the sources of news exposure (journalistic, influencers, political actors, etc.). Further, we conduct a zero-inflated negative binomial regression model (Fávero et al. 2021) to identify the predictors of exposure to political and news content across News Apps, TikTok, YouTube. We model four groups of predictors: We account for sociodemographics. Further, we include political predispositions and news curation practices. Additionally, we controlled for total smartphone, TikTok and YouTube usage. Finally, the model includes news exposure on the respective other platforms as well as offline news use as a predictor to examine how news consumption on one platform relates to others.

This enables us to gain a comprehensive insight into the nature of mobile news exposure and the factors that influence it.

POL06 Cross-Platform News Exposure and Digital Trace Methods

PP 0233 Comparing Subjective and Objective Measures of Online Political Exposure: A Validation Study from Survey and Web Browsing Data

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In today's convergent media environment, internet users are exposed to political information from a plethora of sources, ranging from mainstream media, alternative media, or other platforms such as government or political party websites. The extent of exposure to online political information is central to many communication studies, allowing researchers to draw relations between political information usage and other traits, such as preexisting political views, voting choices, and the frequency of social media use. Such measurement work has commonly been defined by the duration or frequency of exposure to certain types of content and measured via survey data.

However, despite the variety of survey tools used to gauge the intensity of media exposure, the reliability of such measurements has been questioned by both empirical and review studies. These examinations are often achieved by linking survey and digital trace data to examine the extent of overlap between the two sources. Although such misalignment has been corroborated regarding general online exposure, current scholarship rarely visits the reliability of specific types of media exposure—in our case, political content. Even less frequently has scholarship tested whether exposure from different

sources, such as mainstream or alternative news, influences the validity of survey measurements, despite the popularity of such variables in social science research design.

In the present study, we use survey data and web browsing data to explore to what extent political information consumption from different sources contributes to people's everyday media exposure in survey and web browsing data (RQ1). Further, we ask how well people are able to recall their political consumption from different online sources, including mainstream news, alternative news, and other sources, compared to web browsing data (RQ2), where we hypothesize (H1) that people tend to be less reliable in self-reporting political consumption from alternative sources than from mainstream news. Finally, to explore the consequences of potential misalignment, we examine the well-tested relationships between alternative political information exposure and 1) voting choice and 2) social media use across both data sources to see if results are consistent within data types and findings from previous literature (RQ3) .

Our survey and browsing data were collected from N = 678 German residents over six weeks in 2025. By conducting a survey focused on specific types of political consumption via different sources to the tracking period and classifying the websites in the tracking data through manual coding, we first present the variety of information sources for political content online. We then examine the validity of survey measurements in gauging political exposure to different sources compared to web browsing data. Our study contributes to the examination of validity in measuring political consumption with both subjective and objective measurements, how measurement choice affects empirical conclusions related to media use, and the possibilities of measuring online political exposure via web browsing data.

Note. this paper is a work in progress, the results will be published after the data analysis.

POL06 Cross-Platform News Exposure and Digital Trace Methods

PP 0234 Are individual pathways of engagement with political content on TikTok a supply or demand issue?

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TikTok has become an imporant arena for competition for political influence. The platform is fast-paced, reaches predominantly young users and its algorithm can elevate content to massive visibility almost instantly without the need to build a large follower basis first. While the share of political videos among all the content to be encountered on the platform is not particularly large (Katzy-Reinshagen & Barth, 2024), the average user is exposed to nearly 100 videos a day (Zanettou et al., 2023).

Yet, there is still little understanding of the interplay between the political content that is created on the platform, the algorithm that is displaying it to users in their feeds and the users that decide to engage with the content or not. Is the algorithm reactive to the amount of content produced by different political actors? Which political videos do users *actually* engage with? Does this translate into future algorithmic recommendation?

We think that research has hitherto done too little to disentangle issues of demand, supply and algorithmic recommendation in order to tackle the above questions. One approach are studies with so-called 'social research bots.' Yet, due to their research design that employs artificial agents, these studies cannot distinguish between actual user demand and algorithmic recommendation, since they do not have data about which videos real users *actually* watch and interact with.

Hence, in this work, we *first* conceptually disentangle content supply, algorithmic supply and user demand. Content supply is provided by users of the platform, while whether this content is actually shown to users (and to which subset of them) is determined by the algorithm. Especially to what extent the algorithm is reactive to user demand (watched videos fully, interacted with them) is an important question.

Secondly, we investigate this distinction empirically. Disentangling the three levels is only possible with user-level exposure data. We use Data Donation Packages (DDPs). These data provide extremely fine-grained measures of TikTok usage: Individual, user-level trajectories of watched videos, likes, shares, etc. We collected DDPs from 637 TikTok users that also answered questions about, e.g., their political views. We additionally collected metadata from all videos containing political keyphrases in their descriptions. We classify videos into non-political and political according to their descriptions and audio transcripts, which we also use to estimate the political videos' leaning. We test (RQ1) how much content is created by and/or mentioning different political actors on TikTok. We then use information on donors' political leaning to investigate (RQ2) whether the algorithm tends to recommend content congruent with their political leaning or not, (RQ3) whether donors' political leaning is reflected in their demand, and (RQ4) whether their demand is reflected in future algorithmic recommendation.

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POL06 Cross-Platform News Exposure and Digital Trace Methods

PP 0235 Classifying far-right ideology based on digital trace data: A systematic literature review

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Digital communication venues have enabled fringe and partisan political actors to circumvent traditional gatekeepers (Engesser et al., 2017) and directly address their audiences at lower costs. As early adopters of online communication technologies (Conway et al., 2019), far-right actors leverage social media's capabilities and affordances to strategically mainstream radical and extreme ideologies (Rothut et al., 2024). Non-institutionalized actors, such as political influencers and social movements, have benefited from the anonymity of fringe social media platforms that provide from surveillance by security and public surveillance (de Keulenaar, 2023). Current research highlights the successful utilization of these platforms to mobilize (Simon et al., 2023, Zhong et al., 2024) and radicalize (Schulze et al., 2022). At the same time, non-institutionalized anti-democratic actors are able to continually politicize contemporary societal cleavages by seizing discursive opportunities (Wahlström & Törnberg, 2021) and societal crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the European energy crisis following Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine (Greipl et al., 2024).

While the ideological dimensions of more institutionalized political actors, such as parties, are routinely classified through quantitative content analysis of party manifestos (Lehmann et al., 2024) or expert surveys (Rovny et al., 2024), approaches to classifying non-institutionalized far-right actors on digital platforms face several challenges. The diversity and hybridity of frequently anonymous actors, as well their issue flexibility in online environments, complicate a valid ideology classification based on digital trace data. Current approaches aimed at addressing this challenge, such as quantitative content analysis (Buehling & Heft, 2023), expert ratings (Jost & Dogruel, 2023), computational dictionary analysis (Curley et al., 2022), or network-based methods (Zehring & Domahidi, 2023), have not yet been systematized, nor is there a standardized procedure for far-right ideology identification based on digital trace data.

In response to the lack of a consolidated and comparable framework for identifying far-right actors, this systematic literature review seeks to systematically map how far-right ideology is attributed to actors in existing research. To this end, we address two guiding research questions:

RQ1: Which criteria and measurements are employed in the theoretical, empirical, or hermeneutical studies to classify or infer a far-right ideology at the actor level based on observed online behavior?
RQ2: How are these criteria operationalized across institutionalized and non-institutionalized far-right actors in digital communication environments?

This study is based on a corpus of 2,690 scholarly publications, queried from Web of Science, EBSCO Communication Source, ACM Digital Library, and Google Scholar. Relevant studies are identified through a multi-stage screening process in compliance with the best practices outlined in the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021) and are analyzed using a combination of quantitative content analysis and close reading. By systematically mapping existing classification criteria, operationalizations, and data sources, the study aims to contribute to greater conceptual clarity and methodological comparability in research on far-right actors in digital communication environments, and to provide a foundation for more transparent and cumulative future research.

POL07 Selective Exposure, Avoidance, and Conspiracy Audiences

PP 0349 User agency in navigating and avoiding political content in Facebook's news feed

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Social media platforms have become central gateways to political information, often exposing users to news and political content without deliberate seeking. While algorithmic curation plays a crucial role in shaping social media feeds, users are not passive recipients: they can actively engage with, ignore, or avoid political content through a range of individual curation practices. However, it remains unclear to what extent users can meaningfully regulate their exposure to political content in a multi-actor curation environment in which algorithms, media actors, political elites, and social ties simultaneously shape visibility. This paper examines user agency in navigating and avoiding political content on Facebook, focusing on the relationship between individual curation practices, political avoidance, and perceived political exposure.

The study builds on research on incidental news exposure, selective exposure, and curated flows to investigate how active engagement and deliberate avoidance coexist within Facebook's News Feed. In line with this literature, exposure is not treated as a direct outcome of algorithmic processes, rather conceptualized as the result of an interplay between user behavior and other curatorial forces. In this study, special attention is paid to politically disengaged and avoidant users, for whom social media may nevertheless remain an unavoidable site of political encounter.

Empirically, the paper draws on a nationally representative face-to-face survey conducted in Hungary in November 2021 (N = 1000), during a period of intense political communication. Data were collected shortly after the Hungarian opposition primary elections and during the governing party's high-profile "*Stop Gyurcsány! Stop Márki-Zay!*" campaign, two highly salient political events that dominated both offline and online political discourse. This context provides a particularly suitable setting for examining the limits of individual avoidance under conditions of heightened political visibility.

The survey includes detailed measures of perceived political exposure on Facebook from different sources, including friends, political actors, media outlets, groups, and paid advertisements, alongside indicators of political engagement, content preferences, and avoidance behaviors. User agency is operationalized through self-reported curation practices, such as engagement with political content, tendencies to ignore or disengage from politics on Facebook, and preferences regarding political information.

By focusing on perceived exposure, this paper contributes to ongoing debates about the effectiveness of individual curation and the persistence of political visibility on social media. Using two highly salient political events as most-likely cases, it examines how individual curation practices and avoidance behaviors are associated with perceived political exposure on Facebook, and whether politically disengaged or avoidant users can meaningfully limit political visibility during periods of intense political communication.

POL07 Selective Exposure, Avoidance, and Conspiracy Audiences

PP 0350 How do multidimensional and fluid news avoidance patterns relate to political participation: Evidence from a longitudinal Swiss referendum study

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News consumption is widely seen as significant for democracy, as citizens rely on news to stay informed and make democratic decisions. Against this background, the growing prevalence of news avoidance in recent years has raised concerns about its potential threat to democratic societies. Although many studies have examined the factors influencing news avoidance, research directly investigating its relationship with political participation remains underexplored.

Recent studies suggest that news avoidance is not a simple yes-or-no behaviour, but a multidimensional practice. Within individuals' news use, avoidance may vary in intensity, involve different strategies, target different types of news content, and coexist with different levels of baseline news consumption. These dimensions, i.e., avoidance intensity, avoidance strategies, avoidance content, and baseline news consumption, may combine to form distinct news avoidance patterns, which may relate differently to political participation. Accordingly, we ask: **(RQ1)***When collectively considering these dimensions, what news avoidance patterns can be identified?* and **(RQ2)** *How do different news avoidance patterns differ in referendum participation?*

Moreover, existing research indicates that news avoidance is not necessarily stable over time, but can be fluid. Individuals' avoidance behaviours may change across dimensions, and people may shift from one avoidance pattern to another. We therefore further ask: **(RQ3)** *How stable or fluid are news avoidance patterns over time?* and **(RQ4)** *Is change in news avoidance patterns associated with referendum participation?*

To address these questions, we draw on three-wave panel survey data collected in Switzerland before, during, and after a nationwide referendum campaign period, between July and October 2025. More than 1,500 respondents completed all three waves, providing longitudinal measures of news use, news avoidance, and referendum participation.

We will use clustering approach to identify news avoidance patterns to answer **RQ1**. Rather than estimating wave-specific clusters, we pool observations from all three waves and treat each wave-specific observation as a separate input to the clustering procedure. This strategy allows us to identify a common set of avoidance pattern structures that are defined consistently across time, ensuring the comparability of patterns between waves. This will also help with answering **RQ3**. Across three waves, intentions of participating (W1 & W2) and actual turnout in referendum were asked. Combined with the patterns identified in RQ1, and the pattern change in RQ3, we can investigate how different patterns differ in their participating intentions to answer **RQ2** and investigate how pattern change will correlate with actual turnout to answer **RQ4**.

We expect that distinct news avoidance patterns will differ in their association with participation intentions. Patterns characterized by high avoidance intensity may show lower participation, patterns show selective avoidance and high news use baseline may still show relatively high participation. Regarding fluidity, we expect that fluidity itself may not significantly influence participation. These insights can help to understand how multidimensional and fluid news avoidance shapes political participation in a direct-democratic context.

POL07 Selective Exposure, Avoidance, and Conspiracy Audiences

PP 0351 Conspiracy Theories and Audiences of Social Networking Sites' News: A Systematic Review of Literature

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Beliefs in conspiracy theories among citizens have potentially detrimental implications for democratic societies (Uscinski et al., 2022). Notably, the role of social networking sites (SNS) in the spread and adoption of conspiracy theories has become a vital topic in both public debate and academic research (Mahl et al., 2022). However, how these processes unfold among news audiences remains to be systematically mapped. The need for such an overview is especially pertinent now, as the dependence on SNS for news and information keeps increasing (Newman, 2025).

The presented study-in-progress addresses this gap by examining 47 peer-reviewed empirical studies in English from various disciplines, published between 2004 and 2025, and indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, which have been previously acknowledged as suitable sources of data for such systematic reviews (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). Specifically, we examine how reliance on SNS for news and information is associated with beliefs in conspiracy theories and conspiracy thinking. Concurrently, we summarize the concepts, methods, and topics present in the research, as well as the biases and research gaps present in the current conspiracy scholarship regarding SNS news audiences.

Preliminary findings suggest that the associations between SNS news and conspiracy theories vary across platforms and form diverse patterns, preventing any straightforward interpretation. We also identify conceptual inconsistencies in how conspiracy theories and conspiracy thinking are defined and operationalized in the existing research, similar to previous findings (Mahl et al., 2022). Moreover, the reviewed literature exhibits a strong thematic focus on COVID-19 and a geographic concentration in Western contexts, which may introduce a bias in the available knowledge.

The results highlight the need for more articulated conceptualization, broader geographic representation, and caution when generalizing claims about dependence on SNS for news and beliefs in conspiracy theories. In addition, our findings inform media literacy education, platform-specific policies, as well as future research aimed at understanding and addressing conspiratorial engagement in online environments and its impact on democratic processes and societies.

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POL07 Selective Exposure, Avoidance, and Conspiracy Audiences

PP 0352 Taming the long tail: Identifying alternative information exposure in users' digital trace data

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The dissemination of alternative political information, including hyperpartisan content and conspiracy theories, often tied to alternative news media and other low-credibility sources, has been widely linked to declining trust in democratic institutions. Research on exposure to such content has traditionally focused on a fixed set of previously known news outlets and sources. Recent studies suggest that this approach substantially underestimates exposure, as alternative political information increasingly appears across a diffuse and heterogeneous online information environment, including non-news and non-political spaces (Green et al., 2025; de Leon et al., 2025). Furthermore, the majority of online exposure to political content does not occur through dedicated news sites but comes from various sites and actors including entertainment and commercial sites (Wojcieszak et al., 2024).

This study examines exposure to alternative political information to assess the extent to which such exposure occurs beyond previously identified news sources. Data were collected through a nationally representative survey in Denmark in which participants were given the option to donate to donate their desktop browser history and their Facebook activity data. A total of 289 respondents donated at least one type of data. In line with previous studies, we find a large amount of online activity concentrated on a small number of domains pertaining to categories such as webmail, search engines, banking and large national news outlets. However, there is also a long tail of websites and public Facebook pages that rarely receive much attention in research on exposure to political content. The respondents have accessed more than 16,000 websites

and 4,000 Facebook pages or groups at least once. By analysing the long tail of URLs rather than only considering websites at the domain or actor level we can identify and classify sites and social media pages that provide alternative political information beyond just those specific actors, news outlets or other online domains that brand themselves as such.

Our preliminary results show that exposure to alternative political information takes up only ~0.3% of total exposure when assessing users' exposure based on domains known from previous research. To identify substantively similar information appearing outside of these known sources, we employ a two-step content-based approach that separates discovery from conceptual classification. First, we collect content from all URLs and public Facebook pages accessed by participants and assess their semantic similarity to a large reference corpus of Danish alternative news media that cuts across many topics and partisan perspectives using a state-of-the-art embedding model. Second, we apply a few-shot, theory-driven classifier to identify content that closely aligns with conceptual definitions of alternative political information in a Danish context. Together, the two approaches leverage recent advances in LLM-based natural language processing enabling content-level measurement of alternative information exposure in otherwise non-political and previously unclassified online spaces.

POL08 Far-Right and Anti-Liberal Mobilization Online

PP 0344 Far-right settlers on Telegram: Connections, locations, and communication

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The deindustrialization of East Germany in the 1990s, coupled with the subsequent devaluation of real estate and property, made rural areas in the region particularly attractive to far-right extremist projects. Since February 2020, far-right initiatives have campaigned for an influx of West German neo-Nazis into East Germany on the messaging platform Telegram, placing interested participants into suitable völkisch (ethnic-nationalist) settlement projects. Far-right völkisch settlers exert influence in local parliaments, while settlements contribute to the normalization of far-right traditions in structurally weak regions. While settlements can be expected in all (East) German counties, their exact number, locations, and support structures remain unknown. However, due to the far-right völkisch settlers' increased activity on Telegram and their willingness to expand the network, I propose to extrapolate from the network and community structures on Telegram towards structures in the offline world. I demonstrate how to sample far-right völkisch settlers on Telegram, analyze their network structure, map settlements and support structures spatially, and identify key topics within their network.

I present a network- and content-based snowball sampling strategy that includes a round-by-round manual actor classification, resulting in a dataset of 17,785,639 Telegram messages from 683 manually categorized entities. A network analysis was then conducted on this dataset. Backbone extraction and manually curated community detection led to 48 communities, categorized into six overarching groups. The spatial analysis relies on manually extracted locations of entities' traceable imprints on their websites or locations provided in their Telegram messages. Key-topics were extracted from 8,046,570 text-only messages using BERTopic.

Actors supporting far-right völkisch settlements are the most active in referencing other entities. The settlements themselves play a subordinate role in terms of popularity, activity, and importance in the Telegram network. Communities and supporting actors dealing with esoteric practices or Germanic neopaganism and völkisch culture act as bridges between far-right extremist communities and those focused on settler networking and knowledge transfer. Actors from my network operate in nearly all German counties as well as northern Switzerland, northern Austria, parts of Hungary, and additional settlements in Sweden, Poland, and the Canary Islands. Network-based spatial analysis reveals a pipeline of mutual references linking entities in north-west Germany to actors in Austria and onward to multiple settlements in Hungary. The network's key topics revolve around politics, governance, and power, such as international and national politics and conflicts; esotericism and spirituality; alternative approaches to health, nutrition, and an autarkic lifestyle; conspiracy theories related to science and technology; civil resistance; and mutual affirmation and promotion.

The implications of the findings are discussed, particularly with regard to the methodological challenges in this context. The discussion also addresses the internationalization of the settler movement, the presence of far-right völkisch ideology in esoteric content, and the discrepancies between the findings of existing research on the offline activities of settlers and my quantitative insights into their digital communication behavior.

POL08 Far-Right and Anti-Liberal Mobilization Online

PP 0345 Political sharenting and its value affordances: An Italian case study

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Populism and social media share an elective affinity. The affordances of social media platforms encourage the performance of a populist political style and accelerate the circulation of populist tropes. However, while several studies have demonstrated how social media enable the performance of a populist political *style*, little is known about the extent to which they enable or constrain the circulation of populist ideological *content*. We address this gap through the conceptual

lens of value affordances—the principles emerging from interactions between stakeholders and technology. As values are commonly described as the building blocks of ideology, focusing on value affordances unlocks the possibility to investigate the interactions between populism's "thin" ideology, the "thick" ideologies accompanying it, and the norms regulating expression in digital sphere. We illustrate the usefulness of this approach through a case study from Italy, focusing on how party leaders Matteo Salvini and Carlo Calenda stake their "claim to ordinariness" by posting photos of their time off with their children (a practice known as sharenting). In this sense, our case study "controls" for *style* to focus on populism as *content*. Our analysis of the values expressed in 100 sharenting posts circulated by the two politicians on Instagram revealed what follows. Salvini and Calenda converge towards the expression of values typically associated with sharenting: *happiness*, *togetherness*, *care*, and *authenticity*. However, the two leaders diverge in the invocation of values reflecting their respective brands of populism. Salvini's sharenting images display mundane weekend or holiday activities in the company of his daughter. They commonly feature cues for the values of *simplicity* and *conformity*, which we relate to his "everyday" brand of celebrity politics and his right-wing political affiliation. In the captions, Salvini frequently addresses the audience directly with good day wishes and wishes for religious holidays, thus expressing the values of *affiliation* and *civility*, as well as *faith*. In contrast, Calenda's images normally depict visits to places of "high culture" (e.g., museums, archaeological sites) in the company his large nuclear family. They disproportionately feature cues for the value of *wealth*, which we relate to his brand of "managerial" populism modelled after business executives. The associated captions often adopt a *solemn* register, praising the *distinctiveness* of Italian cultural heritage as they try to *persuade* his followers to visit specific sites. Overall, our findings demonstrate that the values associated with sharenting exert a homogenizing effect that constrains the self-presentation of populist politicians. This notwithstanding, we also found that politicians use sharenting as an opportunity to promote their respective understandings of "the people." While Salvini promotes a low brow form of nationalism based on religious holidays and participation in mundane rituals such as Christmas fairs, Calenda adopts an equally nationalist narrative that presents high brow art as cultural heritage that all Italians should know and celebrate. We conclude that the value affordances of vernacular social media genres like sharenting both enable and constrain populist content, imposing value-inflected frameworks within which politicians enjoy some room for maneuver to express their own ideology.

POL08 Far-Right and Anti-Liberal Mobilization Online

PP 0346 Misogynists, Protectors and Critics: Teenage males' engagement with the manosphere in the Czech Republic

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Anti-gender mobilisations have recently been analysed across Western liberal democracies as a far-right political strategy challenging the liberal democratic status quo. Anti-feminist or anti-gender discourses have also been increasingly studied beyond formal politics, mainly with regard to online influencers of the so-called mano- and femosphere. Scholars are concerned with their strategic employment of anti-gender ideas as a symbolic glue or "metalanguage", serving as a form of collective identity-building in the online sphere and an effective business model. Studies typically focus on the adoption of anti-gender and misogyny across various profiles targeting specifically young men ("the manosphere") and on the potential impact on gender relations among the youngest age cohorts.

While research on the manosphere and its ideological content thrives, we still know little about how teenage males, the primary target group of the manosphere, actually consume, interpret, and experience its messages. We address this gap through a three-stage qualitative study of young males' reception of manosphere discourses in the Czech Republic. The research builds on identity theory perceiving anti-gender online ideological mobilizations as a symbolic glue, connecting young men who may feel isolated or marginalised. It also draws on literature on affective and attention economies of social media to understand their role in the popularity of manosphere among youth, as it offers them hegemonic role models of masculinity, dating advice, entrepreneurial skills, and humorous content serving as a potent homosocial currency. Our research aims to capture (a) how young men engage with the manosphere, (b) what motivations and gratifications they derive from this content and (c) how they reflect on possible impact on their attitudes towards women, men and gender issues. The design comprises three consecutive phases: (1) focus groups at Czech secondary schools, (2) diary entries by manosphere consumers identified through focus groups and (3) follow-up in-depth interviews reflecting on the diaries.

This paper presents findings from the first phase, which involved 12 focus groups with 75 teenage males (aged 15–19) in six secondary schools located in diverse geographical and sociodemographic settings. The discussions explored participants' exposure to manosphere content and interpretations of its key messages. To prompt reactions, we employed brief vignettes depicting typical manosphere claims and situations. Preliminary findings based on inductive qualitative coding suggest that teenage males engage with manosphere content in heterogeneous ways. Based on emerging patterns, we propose a typology of four recurring profiles: the "Conservative Protector" (normative, binary masculinity framed as strength and protection of women), the "Toxic Misogynist" (explicit hostility and claims of female inferiority), the "Self-improvement Reformist" (attracted to self-improvement, strength or leadership narratives while rejecting misogyny), and the "External Observer/Critic" or "Alarmist" (distancing himself from the content, critically reflecting on algorithmic exposure and perceiving it as a threat).

The proposed typology serves as a starting point for the next research phases, shifting focus from the manosphere producers to its reception, enabling a more nuanced investigation of personal motivations and gratifications shaping engagement with manosphere content. These insights may be crucial for developing more effective social and educational interventions.

POL08 Far-Right and Anti-Liberal Mobilization Online

PP 0347 Citizen influencers in public diplomacy during wars: The case of Israel-Hamas war

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This study presents an innovative theoretical framework for analyzing the activities of citizen influencers in public diplomacy during threat situations and warfare. While existing literature has primarily focused on official digital diplomacy during crises, this research fills a critical gap in understanding the role of non-state actors in shaping international discourse independently of official channels during security threats. The paper presents a conceptual framework integrating theories of crisis communication, reputational security, public diplomacy, and digital platforms. It focuses on the ways citizen influencers leverage digital platforms to mobilize international support during military conflicts. The theoretical framework includes key factors: influencers' motivation and positioning as diplomatic actors, communication strategies, content topics and style (emotional vs. logical), audience targeting and engagement patterns, narrative construction, combining personal testimony with strategic messages, and levels of expertise. The framework maps how citizens transform into spontaneous digital diplomats during security crises. The theoretical framework was applied to the 'Israel-Hamas War' that began on October 7, 2023, when Hamas committed a massacre of more than 1,200 Israelis and abducted 251, the most brutal terrorist attack in Israel's history and the worst since the Holocaust, until a ceasefire was signed on October 10, 2025. This event constitutes a unique case study for examining how citizen influencers operate in extreme threat situations, when international legitimacy and public support become critical strategic assets. Using a mixed-methods framework, we examined the X-platform activities of twenty leading Israeli influencers during the first two months of the war. The research included quantitative content analysis of approximately 4,000 top tweets, combined with semi-structured in-depth interviews with influencers, designed to generate a deeper understanding of the framework's key factors and operational patterns.

Preliminary findings reveal that citizen influencers adopt communication strategies characterized by high urgency, intense emotional content, and use of harsh visual materials. Influencers operate as "spontaneous digital citizen diplomats," leveraging their authenticity and personal credibility to reach international audiences that are inaccessible to official channels. They create narratives combining personal stories with strategic messages, successfully evoking emotional engagement and support among global audiences. The research contributes to expanding public diplomacy theory to civilian actors in crisis situations, offers a methodological model for evaluating digital influence during conflicts, and provides practical insights for integrating citizen voices in official diplomacy efforts during high security situations.

POL08 Far-Right and Anti-Liberal Mobilization Online

PP 0348 Everyday Extremism on Parenting Forums in Bulgaria and Sweden: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Early internet research celebrated the empowering and emancipatory potential of online forums, including female-dominated spaces such as parenting communities. The medium of the forum allowed users to practise everyday political talk, which occasionally led to mobilising collective action, thereby strengthening democratic participation from below (Bakardjieva, 2012). Today, however, this optimistic view sits uneasily with a transformed platform environment characterised by the mainstreaming and normalisation of exclusionary and authoritarian ideas, including anti-migration, anti-gender, and anti-feminist narratives (Wodak, 2015; Miller-Idriss, 2018; Krzyżanowski, 2020; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022; Volk, 2025). Against this backdrop, a growing body of research has begun to examine how (semi-)anonymous online forums function as sites for the circulation and normalisation of exclusionary and authoritarian ideas. However, this emerging literature has focused overwhelmingly on male-dominated environments, often associated with the manosphere, the far right, and adjacent counterpublics (Massanari, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017; Banet-Weiser, 2018; Ging, 2019). By contrast, women-oriented online spaces remain largely absent from contemporary research on online extremism and ideological mainstreaming.

This study addresses this gap by focusing on female-dominated forums in two European countries: BG-Mamma (Bulgaria) and Familjeliv (Sweden), covering the period 2023–2025. It aims to explore how parenting forums function today as spaces of everyday norm production, and whether, how, and under what conditions exclusionary and extremist narratives surface there. To do so, it draws on the concept of everyday extremism (Askanius & Stoencheva, 2024; Stoencheva & Boshkoska, 2024), which treats extremism not as a fixed ideological position or overt political mobilisation, but as a set of narrative logics embedded in ordinary talk and routine sense-making. Everyday extremism captures the mainstreaming and normalisation of exclusionary, hostile, and violent narratives through mundane expressions of everyday political talk. Rather than

solely promoting overt violence, it operates across a continuum ranging from symbolic and structural violence to explicit dehumanisation and hate speech.

Methodologically, the study employs a sequential mixed-methods design. First, it conducts an exploratory computational mapping of the full 2023–2025 corpus using topic modelling (applied separately to each forum) to identify dominant concerns. These topic clusters are complemented by keyword-in-context checks to locate threads where exclusionary framings become salient. Second, drawing on the computational results, the study uses purposive sampling to select a set of high-relevance threads for qualitative narrative analysis, focusing on the presence and interaction of three narrative components: (1) in-group and out-group constructions, (2) crisis or threat framings, and (3) proposed solutions, ranging from symbolic and structural exclusion to more explicit dehumanisation or hostility. This stage aims to trace how these narrative elements emerge, and whether they stabilise or are contested.

By studying parenting forums through the lens of everyday extremism, the study contributes to debates on digital participation and ideological mainstreaming by critically reassessing the democratic promises of everyday political talk under contemporary platform conditions.

POL09 Populism, Nostalgia, and Political Memory

PP 0464 Nostalgia in populist communication: Deducting moral superiority vs. empathy from the past

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This presentation investigates the strategic use of nostalgia in populist political communication and its implications for morality, identity, and democratic cohesion. Nostalgia has become a potent rhetorical resource in times of uncertainty, enabling populist actors to frame the present as a period of decline and promise a return to an idealized past (Elçi 2024; Menke & Wulf 2021). While research has highlighted nostalgia's role in fostering in-group/out-group dynamics and nationalist identities (Taggart 2004; Norocel, Hellström & Jørgensen 2020), less attention has been paid to its moral dimension, i.e., how nostalgic rhetorics and imaginaries underpin claims of superiority or have the potential to evoke empathy.

Drawing on a qualitative comparison of two Danish populist parties, namely the right-wing Danish People's Party (DF) and the green-left Alternative (Å), during the 2022 national Danish election, this study analyzed the two parties' election manifestos using OpenQDA (Belli et al. 2025). A codebook was developed to identify all uses of the past related to collective memory, history, and policy areas, which for DF resulted in 104 and for Å in 91 passages of different length and substance. In a second step, the coding was specified further to identify how crises, nostalgia, collective identity, morality, and future visions/policies resonate in the passages.

Findings reveal contrasting strategies: DF employs restorative nostalgia to defend cultural heritage, family values, and national traditions, framing immigration and globalization as existential threats. This narrative constructs moral superiority by glorifying Western civilization and delegitimizing cultural "others," reinforcing exclusionary identity politics. In contrast, Å adopts a more reflective nostalgia, referring to past progress and pioneers of social welfare as inspiration for systemic change in the present. Rather than claiming cultural exceptionalism, Å emphasizes moral empathy, urging recognition of privilege and solidarity for both humans and animals. Consequently, the collective memories and histories that are nostalgically woven into political agendas and communication might be more versatile based on whose sense of collective identity and shared morality is targeted, and how exclusive or inclusive the communication is towards others.

While right-wing populism exploits nostalgia to polarize and legitimize regressive agendas (Smeekes, Wildschut & Sedikides 2021), this study demonstrates that populist nostalgic engagement is not inherently anti-democratic. When oriented toward shared responsibility and inclusivity, nostalgia can foster empathy and social cohesion (Wildschut et al. 2010; Zhou et al. 2012). This raises normative questions about the potential for "nostalgia for the better," which acknowledges the value of a polyphony of memory in pluralistic societies (Schwarzenegger & Lohmeier 2020).

By highlighting the moral dimension of nostalgic meaning-making, the presentation contributes to research on memory politics, populism, and affective political communication. It calls for a nuanced understanding of nostalgia in political communication beyond its currently predominant association with right-wing actors, recognizing its ambivalent capacity to either undermine or reinforce democratic norms.

POL09 Populism, Nostalgia, and Political Memory

PP 0465 Virtue and villainy: A comparative study of populist narratives in alternative and legacy media during the federal election period in Germany

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News media play a central role in democratic processes, particularly during elections, as exposure to political information shapes ideological positions, political attitudes, and ultimately voting behaviour (da Silva, 2025). While online extensions of legacy media remain the most widely used sources, the growth of digital political news offers has shifted political

information consumption toward alternative online outlets located at the political fringes, which are increasingly used alongside or instead of established news media (Müller & Schulz, 2021).

Alternative Political Online Media (APOM) are digital-native outlets operating primarily via websites (McDowell-Naylor et al., 2021). They exist outside mainstream media institutions and position themselves as alternatives to established news media. They are also frequently characterized by populist narratives that construct society as divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups—the virtuous people and the corrupt elite—and assert that politics should express the general will of the people (Mudde, 2017). This antagonistic worldview is expressed through recurring moral characterizations: "the people" are portrayed as authentic, hardworking, and morally upright, while "the elite" are depicted as corrupt, detached, or self-serving(Erhard et al., 2023; Olivas Osuna, 2021).

These populist narratives become particularly salient during election periods, as alternative media emphasize specific topics and conflicts gaining traction in public debate. Rather than focusing on fixed issues, populist communication displays broad thematic diversity and attaches itself opportunistically to salient topics as electoral competition intensifies (Poier et al., 2020). Despite growing interest in populist communication, few studies systematically compare legacy and alternative media, particularly regarding how they differ in topic coverage and the amplification of populist narratives during election periods. Consequently, this study examines the most salient topics discussed during the election period and then analyses how APOM and legacy media in Germany differ in their amplification of populist narratives. The analysis draws on 96,137 articles published by 12 APOM outlets (10,111 articles) and 15 legacy media organizations (86,026 articles) during six weeks before and six weeks after the 2025 German federal election.

Methodologically, we apply a BERTopic model to extract topics and seed words based off a dictionary by Gründl (2022) to identify references to "the people" and "the elite". Large language models are then used to assess the moral characterizations attached to these references. Articles containing populist discourse were then further analysed to identify prevalent topics, political actors, and institutions.

Preliminary results show that 58% of APOM articles and 40% of legacy media articles contain simultaneous references to both "the people" and "the elite," often with multiple mentions, reflecting differences in the intensity and repetition of populist narratives across media types. The next steps of the analysis will focus on assessing the characterization of these references and selecting the optimal topic model from 100 parameter combinations. Ultimately, we aim to identify patterns linking topic salience and populist discourse across the two media types.

POL09 Populism, Nostalgia, and Political Memory

PP 0466 Nostalgia and populist challenges in post-industrial communities: Futurephobia and the reimagination of the past

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Post-industrial communities experience some of the highest indicators of relative deprivation and evidence possessing populist and anti-democratic tendencies. The decline in status of the regions and their communities with the closure of coal, steel and related heavy industries has led to them being characterised as "left behind". The economic fragility residents experience in terms of job and income security was worsened by the global economic crisis, Covid-19 pandemic and further economic shocks relating to Brexit and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Many of these communities thus look to populist and far-right movements which employ anti-elitist rhetoric while implicitly promising to restore the greatness and pride these communities once experienced. This paper explores how nostalgia is embedded in the everyday cognition of residents of post-industrial communities and so how this makes them open to manipulation by nostalgic populist rhetoric.

The data, from the DFG/AHRC funded project Voices from the Periphery, explores the socio-economic and political perceptions of residents of regions in the North of England and East of Germany. Utilising the methodology of storytelling cafés, we ask residents of post-industrial communities to reflect on their lifeworlds in the past, present and future. Millennials and over-50s share a sense of pride in the past, in the hard physical labour of themselves, their peers or their ancestors, and their contribution to the national economies. They equally share the sense that the regions were let down: as industries declined, there was no plan to stabilise the economies of the region. Residents display an apathy towards politics and a hopelessness towards the future following years of neglect by a range of governing parties. These reflections, founded on learned attitudes embedded in experience, provide a fertile space for anti-elitist populist thinking to flourish which can then be manipulated to reject centrist, democratic forces. In revealing the voices of the residents in deindustrialised towns and villages, we demonstrate how lifeworld experiences of high relative deprivation can act as a destabilising force on democracies.

POL09 Populism, Nostalgia, and Political Memory

PP 0467 Identifying variants of left-behind social groups in Germany – An updated research agenda on social marginalization and hostile media beliefs

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In times of eroding stability in societies that have long been considered archetypes of democracy, our study addresses the ongoing discussion about the causes and consequences of social marginalization. We make two novel contributions to the field: first, by describing the stratification of the German electorate into different variants of marginalized and non-marginalized social classes, and second, by exploring how class structure intertwines with media-related beliefs.

Our data were collected through an online survey conducted via Bilendi's online access panel (certified according to ISO 20252:2019). Data collection proceeded from September 5 to September 23, 2025. Using quota sampling stratified by gender, age, and education, the final sample comprised 2018 respondents from the German population. 49.8 per cent (n = 1005) of participants were male. Respondents' mean age was M = 45.64 (SD = 14.45, min = 18, max = 69). 21.9 per cent (n = 442) of respondents had a university degree.

Applying latent class analysis, we identify a total of nine distinct societal classes that differ in their responses to four indicators: perceived political efficacy, subjective economic situation, traditionalist values and affective marginalization, that is, the latent feeling of being neglected by society in general. We distinguish between five left-behind, one hybrid and three non-left-behind classes of different sizes and describe them along socio-demographic variables and voting behavior. Inter-class differences in mean age, gender, level of education, household income (by household size), region (east vs. west) and party preferences are statistically significant. Interpreting class profiles combined with a post-hoc analysis of these secondary variables, we find that our results are consistent with structures and narratives of current social and political debates in Germany, proving the validity of our approach. We were able to reproduce, for example, existing income disparities between genders and regions (east vs. west).

In a second step, we demonstrate that the assumption that attitudes towards media and towards politics are immediately interlinked is only true under *certain* structural conditions and cannot be generalized to all identified classes. We find that hostile attitudes towards politics do not explain hostile media attitudes in three left-behind classes, namely those that display the high levels of perceived political marginalization as well as large shares of conservative or right-wing voters. In the remaining left-behind classes (economically marginalized left-wing or non-voters) as well as in all non-left-behind classes, a significant share of within-class variance in the hostile media beliefs variable is explained by hostile attitudes towards politics.

Our findings contribute to an urgently needed shift in the research on social marginalization in demonstrating (1) that the phenomenon spans far beyond right-wing politics and is of considerably more complexity than suggested in much of the existing literature (e.g. Bollwerk *et al.* 2024), and (2) that the heterogeneity of social marginalization clearly reflects in media-related beliefs. These observations serve our project as a starting point for further research on the relationships between social identity and attitudes linked to media and political information.

- Bollwerk, M., Wetzel, E., Schlipphak, B., & Back, M. D. (2024). Who feels marginalized? A latent class analysis of perceived societal marginalization. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations, 27*(3), 597–618.

POL09 Populism, Nostalgia, and Political Memory

PP 0468 The past and the future: Paradoxical political narratives about oil and climate change

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In this paper I will explore how Norwegian political parties, from the left to the right side of the political spectrum, use references to the past in their party manifestos to legitimize political solutions. More specifically, I will scrutinize how parties frame the paradoxical position of being historically- and presently- dependent on the oil and gas industry, while at the same time presenting a viable and livable future due to climate change (Bang & Lahn, 2019; Ihlen, 2006, Borgen-Eide & Gubrium, 2025). In the paper, I ask: How are political parties constructing visions of the future by referring to the past in the context of oil dependency and climate change?

Theoretically, the study will draw on perspectives from memory studies, political communication and populism (Erll, 2022; Menke and Hagedoorn, 2023; Merrill, 2020; Sierp, 2025; Verovšek, 2016). Several studies concerned with political uses of the past, have been focused on populist far-right, and specifically how nostalgic narratives about the nation and the homeland are used to legitimize immigration-critical perspectives and policies (Karakaya, 2020; Menke & Wulf, 2021). However, there is a need for a broader approach to how the past is used also in other political arenas, and further – across the political spectrum.

Methodologically, the study rests on a qualitative content analysis of written party manifestos (N = 15) from three election periods (2015–2020, 2021–2025, 2025–2029), from five parties, representing different political ideologies and positions: The governing Labor Party, and their ally, the Socialist Left Party; the main oppositions parties the Conservative party and the Progress Party; and finally the niche Green Party that has climate as it main policy area of concern. The Party programs represent a specific form of strategic communication where political parties present themselves and their visions for the future to the public. They are written documents that inform the voters of what the political parties plan to carry out if they win, which is necessary for citizens to make informed choices on the election day. Party programs have at the same time been criticized for being unrealistic and opportunistic that potentially may mislead the voters (Eder et al. 2017; Gyampo and Debrah 2013; Kavanagh 1981).

Building on studies that have been concerned with policy developments and political rhetorics about oil, welfare and climate change in Norway (Band & Lahn, 2019; Bhopal, 202; Korsnes et al., 2023), the study illuminate how references to the petroleum past, including the construction of the Norwegian Oil fund, are framed across the political spectrum in their party manifestos. Further, the study discusses how competing narratives about the past enable specific dystopian and utopian visions for the future, including the sustainability of the welfare state and livable future, that is used to legitimize short-term and long-term policy solutions.

POL10 Navigating Disrupted Communication Environments: New Perspectives on Citizen Engagement with Disinformation In and About Eastern Europe

PN 32 "Mom, Google will help you": How older adults navigate search infrastructures during the Russian-Ukrainian war

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Navigating through the landscape of digital information is an important challenge, made exceedingly crucial as crises, such as pandemics or wars, unfold. As digital non-natives, older adults are more likely to experience difficulties with Internet access and use (Hunsaker & Hargittai, 2018), in part due to potentially flawed folk theories of where online content comes from (Fletcher & Nielsen, 2019). Once online, older adults also face a distinctive set of dangers, such as elderly-targeted scams (Oliveira et al., 2019). While research demonstrates that domain-specific knowledge helps older adults navigate search infrastructures (Sanchiz et al., 2017), little is known about older adults' information search practices beyond laboratory conditions and specifically within propaganda-ridden media environments. Informed by recent findings about the susceptibility of (LLM-assisted) search engines to manipulation and propaganda by Kremlin-backed actors (Williams & Carley, 2023; Kravets et al., 2024; Makhortykh et al., 2024), Ukraine emerges as a paradigmatic case for this exploration. Thus, we ask: how do Ukrainian older adults search and verify information online during war? We conducted 8 online and offline focus groups (n = 65) with older adults (60+) across Ukraine in the aftermath of the full-scale Russian invasion in summer 2024. Our analysis combined deductive thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis to explore the participants' information search strategies and the reasonings that foreground them. Through deductive thematic analysis, we identified three themes that reflected the complexity of older adults' information search and reasoning strategies. First, the path-finding theme describes older adults' navigation of digital infrastructures. The length and complexity of paths taken enroute to verified information varied by level of media literacy and topical domain, but were also dictated by participants' media use habits and access to devices, apps, and platforms. Crucially, these infrastructures (e.g., browser type and existing social media accounts and YouTube history), conditioned participants' search and verification practices along the path. Second, the three-step information flow theme describes technological and social intermediaries in information search. Elaborating on the 'two-step flow' (Katz, 1957), this theme explores the social negotiation and/or verification of meanings derived from digital infrastructures and filtered through "official" channels (steps one and two), and the emergence of a third step, the filtration of meanings through intuitive understandings. The third theme describes folk-imaginaries of technological intermediaries ("internet-girl" or "this thing") that older adults incorporate into their information-search reasoning, as obscure information providers. To further understand the recurrence of rhetorical vagueness in focus group responses noted in the third theme, we applied critical discourse analysis. We found that while participants can evaluate the trustworthiness of named sources (traditional media, Telegram media channels, YouTube experts), navigating the digital information landscape brings forth more complex evaluation challenges, which preclude establishing relationships of trust and devising clear strategies of verification. These challenges manifest in the prevalence of unnamed entities ("this thing") in participants' responses. We discuss implications for algorithmic literacy and chart further avenues for research in light of the ubiquitous introduction of LLMs into search engines.

POL10 Navigating Disrupted Communication Environments: New Perspectives on Citizen Engagement with Disinformation In and About Eastern Europe

PN 33 Who believes falsehoods about Ukraine? The impact of age, pro-Russian attitudes and social media use on susceptibility to disinformation in Eastern Europe

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In recent years, information environments in Eastern Europe have been marked by increasing efforts to influence public opinion through pro-Russian narratives (Bokša, 2019; Krekó 2020), particularly following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 (Takácsy, 2023). This has included systematic dissemination of disinformation aimed at shaping public attitudes towards the war and undermining support for Ukraine. Previous research points to a high prevalence of belief in false information about the war among the public in Eastern Europe (HDMO 2024; Wenzel, 2023), with citizens in the region generally demonstrating greater susceptibility to pro-Russian narratives than their counterparts in Western Europe (Hameleers et al., 2024). However, the factors that help explain this tendency remain under-studied, particularly in the context of a rapidly evolving digital information environment. This gap is especially evident in research on age and disinformation, which has traditionally assumed that older people are more susceptible to false and pro-Russian narratives (Loos and Nijenhuis, 2020; Guess et al., 2019). Yet, growing (though still mainly anecdotal) evidence suggests that younger people may be increasingly vulnerable as well – an observation often linked to the spread of deceptive content on new video platforms such as TikTok, or to the political impact of influencer-driven communication networks, as illustrated e.g. during the 2024 Romanian Presidential Election. This paper addresses these gaps by examining generational differences in susceptibility to disinformation about the Russia–Ukraine war in a comparative cross-national setting, and by assessing how these differences are shaped by patterns of social media use and attitudes towards Russia. Utilizing data from a representative population survey (N = 2,440) conducted in Poland, Romania and Serbia in summer 2025, the study addresses two key research questions: (RQ1) Which age group is most likely to believe Russian-linked disinformation about Ukraine? and (RQ2) How is this susceptibility mediated by social media use and pre-existing pro-Russian attitudes? Preliminary results reveal clear cross-national variation in the relationship between age and susceptibility to pro-Russian disinformation. In Poland and Romania – contrary to much of the existing literature, largely based on Western contexts – younger cohorts are consistently more likely to believe false claims about the war than older adults. These generational differences persist even after controlling for other socio-demographic characteristics and pro-Russian attitudes. In Serbia, by contrast, age effects are substantially weaker and become largely insignificant once pro-Russian attitudes are accounted for, suggesting that susceptibility is driven primarily by political alignment rather than generational position. Patterns of social media use only partially mediate these generational effects. Aggregate measures of social media news consumption explain relatively little of the observed age differences. However, when focusing specifically on TikTok use, the generational gap in Poland and Romania is attenuated, indicating that platform-specific exposure contributes to higher susceptibility among younger users. Overall, the findings challenge the assumption that older adults are inherently more vulnerable to disinformation, and instead highlight how susceptibility among younger cohorts is shaped by the interaction between political attitudes and selective engagement with platform-driven information environments.

POL10 Navigating Disrupted Communication Environments: New Perspectives on Citizen Engagement with Disinformation In and About Eastern Europe

PN 34 Deceit between facts and morality: Understanding audience engagement with disinformation

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Existing literature tends to define disinformation in relation to falsehood and deceit, and contrasts it, often in a binary way, with accurate information or 'truth' (Adams et al. 2023, Kapantai et al. 2021, Wardle 2017). This narrow approach has some notable weaknesses that have been acknowledged in literature, and several conceptual alternatives have been proposed (Hameleerts, Van der Meer and Vliegenhart 2021, Hutchings et al. 2025, Tandoc et al. 2018). While valuable, even these alternative conceptualizations tend to retain an epistemic or 'infocentric' perspective (Lenoir and Anderson 2023, Peck 2023) which reduces communication processes to the transmission of information and misses their ritual, meaning-making dimensions (cf. Bastos and Tuters 2023, Cabañes 2020). To develop a more comprehensive understanding of disinformation, we draw attention to its moral dimensions. In the conceptual part of the paper, we offer a conceptualization of the morality of disinformation, distinguishing between three layers: the moral framings evident in public discourses about disinformation, the moral framings embedded in materials designated as disinformation, and the moral framings arising in citizens' responses to such materials. In the empirical part of the paper, we examine the last of these three layers by drawing on a thematic analysis of 18 focus groups conducted between April and June 2025 in three countries: Poland, Romania and Serbia. Focus groups comprised a total of 125 participants, divided by generation (18–30, 31–50, 51–75). Participants

included roughly equal proportions of men and women, with 64% of participants having completed higher education and the remaining 36% secondary education. Questions covered participants' media consumption habits, responses to specific disinformation examples, general experiences with false information, and perceptions of disinformation as a societal problem. Four examples of disinformation were selected for each country, two concerning the Russia-Ukraine war and two focusing on gendered disinformation related to LGBTQ+ rights, all identified as false or misleading by local fact-checking organizations. Our analysis shows that moral judgments play a fundamental role in citizens' direct engagement with disinformation across all three countries. Participants frequently judged claims regarding events or actors not only based on whether they are factually correct ('epistemic mode') but also based on whether they are morally right ('moral mode'). Importantly, both epistemic and moral judgments were used by participants as part of 'boundary work' – that is, as part of arguments about which issues belong to the realm of legitimate controversy and are thus acceptable as an object of news reporting and public debate, and which should remain excluded. To put it differently, encounters with disinformation prompted participants to engage in negotiating the boundaries of legitimate controversy, consensus and deviance. We conclude by reflecting on what these findings mean for scholarly research on disinformation and for counter-disinformation practices.

POL10 Navigating Disrupted Communication Environments: New Perspectives on Citizen Engagement with Disinformation In and About Eastern Europe

PN 35 Am I being manipulated? Perceptions of, blame attributions for, and reactions to coordinated digital manipulation in Hungary's 2026 Parliamentary Election

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Using original survey data, this study examines the extent to which Hungarian voters in the April 2026 Parliamentary Election perceived themselves to be exposed to digital manipulation, which specific forms of manipulation they reported, which agents they attributed these practices to, and what reactions such perceptions elicited. The digital environment can be conceptualized as an unedited (Bimber & Gil de Zúñiga, 2020) and disrupted (Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018) public arena in which coordinated manipulative strategies find ample opportunity to operate (Thiele et al., 2025). This dynamic may be particularly pronounced in hegemonic illiberal public spheres (Štětka & Mihelj, 2024), where the watchdog capacity of independent publics is constrained by limited reach and polarized discourse, while the uneven competition incentivizes the illiberal side to deploy these tools with virtually unlimited resources and minimal risk, while simultaneously tempting challengers with the motivational pull of an unfair contest and the low cost of achieving reach. Hungary represents a paradigmatic case of this configuration, where multiple actors have employed coordinated manipulative strategies, especially in the domain of social media advertising (Bene et al., 2023; Bene & Juhász, 2025). In the increasingly contentious 2026 campaign, coordinated manipulation already appears to play a central role, not least because platform restrictions on political advertising have shifted attention toward alternative tactics: investigative journalists have reported human-coordinated networks of fake accounts, large-scale foreign-based profile activity aimed at manipulating engagement metrics, AI-generated disinformation content, the political capture of well-known meme pages, centrally organized digital activists operating under explicit instructions, and astroturf-like activities by celebrities. Drawing on a representative population survey fielded in the final weeks of the campaign, this paper assesses how strongly voters perceive these manipulative practices in their digital information environment, disaggregating perceptions across specific instruments such as fake profiles, astroturf pages and actors, and disinformation activities (RQ1). Because manipulative practices typically imply concealed actors (Thiele et al., 2025), the study also investigate attribution processes: whether respondents associate perceived manipulation with domestic political actors, foreign interference, or platform-driven economic incentives (RQ2a), and whether their perceptions are selective – primarily attuned to abuses attributed to the opposing side – or generalized, extending across partisan lines (RQ2b). Finally, it examines the downstream consequences of perceived exposure to coordinated social media manipulation. Specifically, it tests whether such perceptions reduce epistemic political efficacy and foster skepticism about the possibility of knowing political reality (RQ3a), or instead encourage a stronger turn toward professional news media (RQ3b) and/or greater reliance on the guidance of preferred political actors or particular digital opinion leaders (RQ3c).

POL10 Navigating Disrupted Communication Environments: New Perspectives on Citizen Engagement with Disinformation In and About Eastern Europe

PN 36 Misinformation, incivility and the problematic boundaries of academic freedom in online discourse about Ukraine

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Online misinformation and incivility have become major topics within the political communication literature over recent years (Boatright et al. 2019; Muddiman 2017; Jerit and Zhao 2020). However, there has been little if any consideration of

how academics themselves sometimes incorporate incivility and misinformation into their own discourse when participating in (and shaping) public debates. In fact, it is not uncommon for academics to 'rant' on social media about issues of public concern, using language that may be considered uncivil. This has been a visible phenomenon during Russia's war on Ukraine, with academics sometimes ranting to attract attention to atrocities, injustice, and misinformation. More rarely, misinformation about Ukraine has unfortunately appeared in publications written by established scholars (for example, Hayward and Robinson 2024), and such publications have been among the targets of academic rants. However, public uncivil rants are not without risks for academics, because universities prohibit some forms of incivility and it is not clear where the boundaries of permissible speech are located; there is room for subjective interpretation in the wording of multiple intersecting laws and policies, and there is little transparency in how universities apply and enforce policies. This paper addresses two questions that are of practical relevance to scholars working within and beyond Political Communication: (1) To what extent and in what contexts are academics bound to communicate publicly in ways that are 'civil'? (2) To what extent and in what contexts are academics bound to be factually accurate in their public statements? The questions are addressed together, both from a regulatory perspective (to what extent are academics bound in practice by their employers' rules), and from a normative perspective (to what extent should the 'civility' and accuracy of academics' public discourse be regulated?) Based on a critical review of relevant literature and academic rant examples relating to the Russia-Ukraine war, the paper argues that universities in the UK are more likely to censor academics for violating 'civility' requirements than for repeatedly violating the professional norm of factual accuracy by endorsing misinformation. The paper further argues that this is problematic, and proposes steps which might improve the regulation of academic freedom as it pertains to incivility and misinformation.

POL11 Platform Campaigns and Voter Mobilization

PP 0460 Misinformation perceptions and electoral participation: Evidence from a three-wave panel survey in the Netherlands, Germany and Poland

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The aim of this study is to better understand whether and how perceptions of the salience of misinformation affect electoral participation. Concerns around misinformation are high, especially during key political events like elections (e.g., Farooq et al., 2025), and misinformed beliefs have a small negative impact on electoral participation (Green et al., 2022; van Kessel et al., 2021; Partheymüller et al., 2022). However, we know relatively little about the impact of misinformation as a perceptual crisis, especially in the context of elections where misinformation concerns seem to be amplified. Our overarching research question therefore asks: How do misinformation perceptions relate to electoral participation?

A focus on misinformation as a perceptual crisis matters seeing that citizens are highly worried about the prevalence of misinformation (for a review, see: Hameleers, 2025), estimate it at about 50% of all information they encounter (Hameleers et al., 2023; van der Meer & Hameleers, 2024). In an election context, citizens were additionally found to be highly worried about the (mis)use of generative AI for deliberate deception (Farooq et al., 2025). Subjective perceptions that misinformation is abundant and dangerous may have tangible consequences for voting in elections. We study this in a comparative fashion focusing on three EU countries, namely Germany, Poland and the Netherlands before, during and after the European Parliament elections 2024.

Building on theoretical arguments from studies on perceived electoral integrity (e.g., Frank & Martínez i Coma, 2017), we hypothesize that higher levels of perceived misinformation prevalence decrease the likelihood to participate in the elections (H1). We argue that perceived electoral integrity is critical, because only if citizens believe that they have access to accurate and reliable information relevant to the electoral process, will they perceive elections as meaningful. If citizens view the media landscape as failing to provide high-quality information on political candidates, parties, policies, and the electoral process itself, then this undermines electoral integrity.

Based on motivated reasoning mechanisms we hypothesize that citizens are more likely to participate in the EP24 elections if their favourite party is perceived as a more likely target of misinformation (H2). Citizens may seek to resolve the dissonance caused by a negative misinformation attack on their favored party by doubling-down on their allegiance. By casting their vote for their favored party, citizens reaffirm their commitment to the political party that is under attack by hostile outgroups. Our preliminary findings based on logistic regression analyses show mixed results for H1: higher perceived prevalence of misinformation in waves 1 and 3 are negatively related to electoral participation, which supports H1, however, the opposite pattern emerges in wave 2. In support of H2, we find that citizens who perceive their own party to be a more likely target of misinformation are more likely to participate in the elections.

These findings highlight the importance of studying misinformation as a perceptual crisis and suggest a nuanced picture where not only the amount, but also the targets of misinformation have both serious and divergent consequences for democratic participation.

POL11 Platform Campaigns and Voter Mobilization

PP 0461 Attention to political advertising on social networking platforms: Evidence from a linkage analysis using mobile in-app tracking, survey, and content analysis

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Paid digital political advertising (DPA) on social networking platforms (SNPs) places targeted, personalized campaign messages in users' feeds (Kruschinski & Bene, 2022). Prior research has examined its persuasive and mobilizing effectiveness conditional on exposure quantity and the congruency between ad and recipients' characteristics. However, studies rely largely on experiments and self-reports, providing limited evidence on whether users *pay attention* to DPA during real-world SNP use (Guldemund et al., 2026). While attention is a crucial precondition for media effects, its empirical assessment remains methodologically challenging (Neijens et al., 2024). Consequently, it remains unclear whether drivers of DPA effectiveness attract user attention that is not forced or triggered by study design. To address this gap, we introduce a methodological combination of tracking data, survey and content analysis to empirically answer how *exposure quantity* and *congruency* relate to reception time as an indicator of attention to DPA.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Mere exposure theory suggests that *repeated exposure* to DPA from the same party increases visibility and persuasive/mobilization effectiveness (Chu et al., 2024). However, whether repeated exposure stimulates attention or produces attentional wear-out effects remains unclear (RQ1). Beyond quantity, advertising effectiveness depends on *message-user congruency* (Hirsch et al., 2024). We examine two forms: *party congruency*, defined as recipients' positive evaluations of the advertising political party, and *issue congruency*, the personal relevance of the advertised policy issue (Noetzel et al., 2025). Party congruency should increase attention through partisan selective exposure (H1), while issue congruency should enhance attention by stimulating involvement with personally salient topics (H2).

Method

We employ a linkage design combining *mobile in-app tracking*, *survey data*, and *content analysis* with a sample representative of German Facebook and Instagram users (N = 1,509). For four weeks preceding the 2024 European Parliament election, participants' mobile devices were tracked daily, capturing all DPA exposures on Facebook and Instagram. This yielded 3,603 ad contacts with German parties for n = 445 participants. *Attention* was operationalized as reception time via the in-app tracking: the duration an ad remained on screen before scrolling or app closure (M = 11.5s; Mdn = 3.5s). *Party congruency* was measured via survey, where participants rated their evaluation of each German party. *Issue congruency* was derived by matching policy issues coded manually in a subsample of 563 unique ads (2,197 ad contacts) with participants' self-reported issue importance.

Results

GLM regressions (participant-nested with controls) show that reception time increased significantly with same-day exposures to ads from the same party (RQ1; β = 0.06, p = .007). Contrary to H1, ads from negatively evaluated parties received significantly longer reception times than those from positively evaluated congruent parties (β = 0.19, p = .008). Both effects remain robust in the coded subsample. Consistent with H2, issue congruency had a significant positive effect on attention (β = 0.18, p = .03). While our findings support mere exposure and issue-congruency arguments, they also point to unexpected party (in)congruency effects, which can be discussed in terms of motivated reasoning and counterarguing (Guldemund et al., 2025). We thus provide new empirical insights into attention dynamics in DPA and demonstrate the value of linkage designs for studying exposure and attention in personalized online environments.

POL11 Platform Campaigns and Voter Mobilization

PP 0462 Communicating conflict within parties: A content analysis of German party congresses

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Political parties are the central actors of most democratic systems. They were traditionally described as unitary collectives, but empirical political science research shows that they are divided into ideologically diverse factions. These factions compete for power, are highly organized and demonstrate cross-issue discipline. Their strong organization facilitates party splits when intraparty conflicts escalate, a phenomenon that particularly affected the German party system in recent years, for example with the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance splitting from the Left Party or the WerteUnion's departure from the Christian Democrats. But factional conflict is also an inherent feature of intraparty democracy, and many factions remain and manage to bridge their differences.

Intraparty conflicts can thus lead to different outcomes. But a central element in these conflicts, their communicative negotiation, has hardly been studied in political communication research. This is not only problematic because of splits Interfactional relationships have also been shown to affect programmatic directions of parties and the stability of whole party systems. Consequently, this paper addresses this gap by examining how factions within Germany's two major mainstream parties, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), communicate in the face of different intensities of disagreement and how communication relates to conflict outcomes. A quantitative content analysis of federal party congress speeches between 2015 and 2025 is conducted. Factions enter direct competition at party congresses, where they publicly discuss motions and amendments. Four policy areas are included in the analysis due to their salience in German politics over the past decade: migration, environment and climate, labor policy, and armament.

The analysis is based theoretically on the approaches of factionalism and interaction modes. Six theoretically derived interaction types between factions (cooperative, coexisting, negotiative, competitive, conflictive and degenerative factionalism) serve as the basis of the analysis, differing in the degrees that communication is (1) agreement oriented and (2) expresses ideological distance. Variables mainly include stylistic communication characteristics such as arguments, verbal attacks, or expressions of approval. A subsequent cluster analysis shows whether these ideal types are reflected in actual intraparty communication or whether alternative patterns emerge. The actual communication types are further tested regarding their relationships to outcomes, policy area, party, and time period. Given the limited existing research on interfactional communication, the study thus adopts a rather exploratory approach.

Preliminary results reveal that disagreements are discussed extensively in the SPD, while speaking time is more restricted in the CDU. Conflicts in the SPD are articulated with more offensive language such as attacks and accusations. Concerning the policy areas, the CDU experiences particularly strong conflicts over migration and labor policy, while armament proves to be the most divisive issue within the SPD. A similarity between both parties lies in the prominent role of their youth organizations as vocal critics of the party mainstream. Overall, the analysis contributes to political communication research by highlighting how communicative practices within parties and the management of internal conflicts shape the functioning of party democracy. The study also contributes to a broader understanding of meso-level polarization.

POL11 Platform Campaigns and Voter Mobilization

PP 0463 An (angry) image is worth a thousand words? A multimodal computational cross-national study on emotions in political parties Facebook posts during the 2024 EP election campaigns

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Considerable evidence exists that election campaigns across the globe have become more aggressive in recent decades, often showcasing negative and emotional content to capture the public's attention in information-rich environments. The rise of social media has accentuated this tendency, due to the algorithmic architecture of these platforms, building on politicians' need to boost engagement and visibility. Facebook, a key platform in political communication, offers a unique portrait of this dynamic due to the emotional reactions in its architecture. Existing research shows that text-based campaign communication on social media can elicit *angry* reactions, which in turn boosts visibility. Facebook is, however, a multimodal platform where the textual and visual content interact. Interestingly, our understanding regarding the usage of *visuals* (and multimodality in general) in campaign messages to elicit anger remains limited.

Given the predominance of visuals in today's digital environments, as well as their ability to quickly and efficiently communicate emotions, this paper seeks to narrow the gap in our understanding of which visual elements contribute to *angry* reactions on Facebook-based political communication.

What is the correlation between European parties' visual tools with angry reactions on Facebook? (**RQ1**)

In addition to being emotionally evocative, visuals can be used alongside textual arguments to reinforce them; inversely, visuals can introduce ambiguity to a textual argument, e.g. softening the edge of negative messages. Understanding that visuals and text seldom operate separately, we also investigate the multimodal interaction between text and images.

What is the emotional congruence between the textual and visual content of European parties' campaign communication on Facebook? (**RQ2**)

Our approach combines a quantitative content analysis of the captions text (completed) and a computational analysis of the images (ongoing, to be completed in Spring 2026) of 5855 Facebook posts by 186 political parties in ten EU countries during two/four weeks of campaigning prior to the 2024 EP election days. The article takes an inductive approach, aiming to uncover patterns in how visual tools are used across the party posts. Using LLaVa-Video-7B-Qwen2, an open-source Vision Language Model (VLM), we annotate these images ($N = 5855$) and conduct an automated content analysis to identify visual and emotional concepts in the images that correlate with more *angry* reactions.

Through semantic clustering, images are first grouped based on their connotative similarities and then correlated with patterns in user's angry reactivity. Additionally, our multimodal approach with separate coding of text and images allows for a deeper exploration of emotional congruence and incongruence between textual and visual components. Against the

background of increasing negative campaigning and populist communication, we seek to understand whether and how images are used to concentrate, or dilute, this negativity.

Our study contributes to the conference's theme, because visuals and multimodality have been shifting ground in political communication for a while now, but our understanding of how text and images interact to create emotion in political messages lags behind.

POL12 Long-Term Campaign Dynamics in Hybrid Media Systems

PP 0572 Strategic adaptation under democratic strain: Campaigning in hybrid media systems (2002–2022)

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The transformation of political campaigning in hybrid media systems has intensified long-standing tensions between strategic efficiency and democratic ideals. While research on political communication has documented processes of professionalization, digitalization, and platformization, less attention has been paid to how political parties internally negotiate these tensions over time. This paper addresses this gap by examining how Swedish political parties have learned, translated, and institutionalized practices of strategic political communication across six national election campaigns between 2002 and 2022.

Drawing on theories of organizational learning and translation, the study conceptualizes campaign development as a dynamic process in which parties selectively adapt external communication ideas while seeking to preserve democratic legitimacy. Rather than treating campaign change as a linear response to technological innovation, the paper foregrounds political parties as organizational actors operating under competing logics: journalistic scrutiny, algorithmic visibility, participatory expectations, and internal democratic norms. Hybrid media systems thus function not only as a structural context but as a continuous source of organizational strain that shapes strategic decision-making.

Empirically, the paper is based on a longitudinal qualitative case study of Swedish election campaigning. The analysis draws on 45 in-depth interviews with party secretaries and senior campaign officials from all parliamentary parties, conducted after the national elections of 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018, and 2022. This rare longitudinal elite material provides insight into how parties reflect upon, evaluate, and reorganize their communication practices over time. The design allows for tracing the full trajectory of campaign innovations—from early experimentation and imitation to normalization, contestation, and decline.

The findings identify three interrelated organizational mechanisms that structure campaign adaptation in hybrid media environments: imitation of perceived best practices, contextual translation of imported communication concepts, and institutionalization into stable routines and professional roles. Practices such as news management, marketing techniques, political advertising, and social media campaigning have gradually become embedded within party organizations. At the same time, each wave of innovation has generated new democratic tensions, particularly concerning centralization of message control, data-driven targeting, algorithmic dependence, and the erosion of participatory ideals.

The paper shows that hybrid media systems intensify permanent campaigning and amplify pressures for speed, visibility, and responsiveness, often at the expense of deliberation and internal democracy. Organizational learning thus emerges as both technical and normative: parties continuously negotiate how far strategic adaptation can proceed without undermining credibility, trust, and democratic legitimacy. By integrating organizational learning theory with political communication research, this study contributes a process-oriented perspective on how democratic tensions are managed—and reproduced—within contemporary campaign organizations operating under conditions of hybrid and platformized media.

POL12 Long-Term Campaign Dynamics in Hybrid Media Systems

PP 0573 "Meet the new boss – same as the old boss" – A longitudinal study of negative campaigning and Facebook engagement

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This study presents a longitudinal analysis of the communication of parties and party leaders on Facebook, focusing on the Norwegian Progress Party and its leaders, Siv Jensen and Sylvi Listhaug, over a decade-long period. Utilizing a hybrid content analysis approach that combines Large Language Models (LLMs) with human classification, we assess the sentiment of Facebook posts—categorized as negative, positive, or neutral—and the interactions (likes, shares and comments) that arise from these posts. Our findings reveal a significant increase in negative sentiment and engagement over time, particularly under Listhaug's leadership, corroborating the claim that negative content drives online engagement.

The study contributes to understanding the evolving landscape of digital politicking, emphasizing the interplay between political actors' communication strategies and audience engagement. It addresses the call for longitudinal insights into political communication, showing that negative sentiment in political posts, characterized by criticism of opponents, has

become more prevalent over time. This trend aligns with the broader shift towards negative campaigning observed in various political contexts.

The research further examines the relationship between post sentiment and different types of Facebook engagement—shares, comments, and likes. Negative posts were found to drive higher levels of shares and comments, supporting the notion that negativity is a potent force in both politics and social media engagement. However, the relationship between negative content and likes was less straightforward, with positive content often leading to more likes. This suggests that while negativity may drive more active forms of engagement, such as sharing and commenting, positive content may still hold appeal for actors seeking what could perhaps be referred to as lighter forms of interaction. Expressed differently, different types of sentiment result in different types of Facebook interactions – a finding that assists in our understanding of the contemporary political landscape.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of using LLMs for sentiment analysis in political communication research, offering a scalable approach for analyzing large datasets in a non-english language. Essentially, all 11 160 posts provided by the two subsequent party leaders and the party itself between 2013 and 2023 were classified as characterized by positive, neutral or negative sentiment. Reliability between man and machine was based on a five percent sample of all posts (N = 558) and calculcated using Krippendorff's alpha with a result of .82, indicating satisfactory levels of reliability.

In conclusion, this study provides longitudinal insights into the use of sentiment in political communication on social media, highlighting the interplay between sentiment type, audience engagement and political actor. It underscores the importance of adapting communication strategies to the evolving digital landscape, where negative sentiment can be a powerful tool for political actors seeking to amplify their messages and engage with audiences. It also points to the clear role of individual politicians in relation to the parties they lead – indeed, the apparent "Listhaug effect" is apparent in the results, as the mother party adopts more negative stylistics directly after her takeover as leader.

POL12 Long-Term Campaign Dynamics in Hybrid Media Systems

PP 0574 To trend or not to trend – That is the question. Tracing long-term patterns in German newspaper coverage of Federal and European election campaigns, 1949/1979 to today

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Understanding how election campaign communication changes over time is a central concern in political communication research. Scholars frequently assume linear, long-term trends in campaign communication and media coverage (Krewel & Wolsing 2023; Schäfer & Schmidt 2016). A prominent framework is the Americanization or modernization thesis (e.g., Donges 2000), proposing increases in personalization, visualization, negativity, horse-race reporting, and an overall expansion of the campaign period ("permanent campaigning") in media coverage.

Testing such assumptions requires longitudinal content analyses with consistent methodology and stable operationalizations. Yet such studies are rare; most research relies on single-election case studies (Krewel & Wolsing 2023; Strömbäck & Kaid 2008).

Addressing this gap, we examine long-term patterns in German election campaign coverage across all federal (Bundestag) elections since 1949 (21 elections) and all European Parliament (EP) elections since 1979 (10 elections).

We conducted quantitative content analyses from four national quality newspapers (Frankfurter Rundschau, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Welt) during the four weeks prior to each election (Bundestag: 7,702 articles; EP: 2,130 articles). All coding was conducted manually using a consistent instrument, only minimally updated before each election (e.g., candidates, parties) without changing underlying operationalizations—an approach unique in German political communication research.

We test for long-term (linear) trends in

(RQ1) personalization (more candidate mentions),
(RQ2) visualization (more candidate images),
(RQ3) negativity (more negative candidate evaluations),
(RQ4) horse-race reporting (more poll coverage), and
(RQ5) the temporal expansion of campaign coverage.

Our findings reveal little evidence of linear long-term trends. For personalization (RQ1), Bundestag election consistently shows high levels of candidate references, while EP elections display lower levels, with brief peaks in 2014 (introduction of lead candidates) and 2024 (von der Leyen as lead candidate). For visualization (RQ2), Bundestag coverage shows a short-term increase in candidate images between 2002 and 2009, followed by decline or fluctuation; EP coverage shows a gradual increase since 2004.

Candidate evaluations (RQ3) remain consistently critical and fluctuate within similar ranges for both election types. Poll reporting (RQ4) remains at a low level between zero and four percent across all elections. Finally, no trend toward an

expanded campaign period (RQ5) is found: the share of articles published in the fourth pre-election week does not increase over time.

Overall, our findings challenge assumptions about linear, long-term trends in election coverage and underscore the need of context-sensitive analyses that consider election-specific factors such as candidate constellations or party competition.

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POL12 Long-Term Campaign Dynamics in Hybrid Media Systems

PP 0575 "As time goes by" – Assessing day-by-day campaigning prioritizations across platforms and elections

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Social media have become highly dynamic campaigning tools, enabling political actors to respond to events and adjust strategies almost in real time (e.g., Kreiss, 2016; Ennser-Jedenastik et al., 2021). This adaptability is crucial, as campaigns can shift rapidly due to unexpected developments, fluctuating polls, or the approaching election day. Examining campaign practices on social media on a day-by-day basis can therefore provide valuable insights into strategic priorities and their drivers. Yet, despite extensive research on social media in election campaigns, such fine-grained analyses remain rare. Most existing studies adopt cross-sectional rather than longitudinal perspectives.

Addressing this gap, this paper draws on a content analysis of posts by Norway's main political parties and their leaders on Facebook and Instagram during two recent parliamentary elections—2021 and 2025. Our paper aims to answer the following research questions: (1) How do Norwegian parties prioritize policy issues and calls to action across Facebook and Instagram during election campaigns? (2) Do audience engagement patterns influence subsequent campaign content? (3) Are these patterns consistent across platforms and elections?

Our analysis focuses on two content dimensions: (1) Policy issues (e.g., health, economy, environment, employment) raised in posts, which, to a certain degree, are likely to reflect strategic responses to recent events and shifts in polls (e.g., Pereira, 2019; Ivanusch et al., 2023); (2) Calls to action (e.g., mobilizing followers to vote), which indicate how campaigns adapt as election day nears and competition intensifies (e.g., Wurst et al., 2023). Investigating these categories across time during both election campaigns will reveal whether policy issues fade closer to election day, when mobilization messages are expected to dominate. Additionally, engagement metrics—likes, comments, shares—are included for each post. These allow us to examine whether audience reactions influence subsequent content decisions, such as amplifying topics that generate high engagement and avoiding those that do not.

Norway, which combines high voter turnout with widespread social media use among parties, politicians, and voters, is a well-suited case to investigate how parties prioritize certain content in the course of European election campaigns. Coding for the 2021 election is complete and reliability-tested; coding for 2025 is ongoing and will conclude in spring 2026. Comparing two campaigns allows us to link post content with data on the election campaigns (e.g., polls and events), shedding light on how contextual factors shape short-term strategies. Comparing two platforms enables us to assess whether these strategies are platform-specific or overarching.

Preliminary findings from the 2021 campaign suggest that policy issues declined as election day approached, while calls for mobilization—primarily urging votes—increased. The comparison with 2025 will show whether these patterns persist and how they differ across platforms and contexts. By analyzing campaign dynamics at this granular level, the study contributes to understanding how political actors prioritize content in response to evolving conditions. It also highlights the interplay between strategic messaging, audience engagement, and platform affordances in shaping modern election campaigns.

POL13 Journalism and Polarization: Fueling the Fire and How To Tame It

PN 51 (De)polarizing practices in journalism: A conceptual framework and research agenda

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Political communication research has argued that journalistic reporting can fuel polarization. Scholars point to practices such as conflict framing, winner-loser narratives, and the emergence of hyper-partisan outlets as particularly harmful (e.g.,

Lawrence, 2000; Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016; Price, 1989). However, content analyses that directly measure polarizing reporting remain rare (Kubin & Sikorski, 2021), and the field still lacks an integrative framework connecting polarization research and journalism studies to analyze (de)polarizing journalistic practices. Our approach starts from the assumption that journalism serves a double function in a democratic public sphere. Firstly, it makes social conflicts visible by giving voice to different perspectives, thus reproducing controversy driven by social actors. Secondly, journalism moderates debates by amplifying certain actors' voices and frames, thus providing salience, contextualization, and commentary. It is in this second function that journalism has agency in co-producing, with other public actors, more or less polarized debates. While journalistic practices shape patterns of news coverage that may fuel a spiral of polarization, they may also enable controversial but constructive public debates about solutions to pressing challenges. We identify four categories of practices that may plausibly fuel polarization: (1) overreporting polarization, (2) hyper-partisan coverage, (3) reconstructing debates as toxic two-camp fights, and (4) focusing on problems rather than solutions. Firstly, journalistic meta-discourse about polarization may over-diagnose and even deepen divergence (Lee, 2022; Levendusky & Malhotra, 2016) by exaggerating depictions of society as falling apart (i.e., "false polarization"; Fernbach & Van Boven, 2022). Such portrayals may feed a self-fulfilling cycle of polarization (Wilson et al., 2020). Secondly, media organizations may align ideologically with extreme actors, providing coverage that is not only biased on single issues but also aligned with broader party lines (i.e., ideological alignment; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Druckman et al., 2013). Thirdly, journalistic routines such as selecting and emphasizing aspects that provide news values such as conflict and negativity (the idea of news values dates back to Lippman, 1922, and Galtung & Ruge, 1965, elaborated e.g. in Eilders, 2006, and O'Neill & Harcup, 2009), can recast pluralistic debate as a toxic two-camp fight in which the loudest, most extreme voices stand in for each side. This can heighten cross-cutting exposure to the most antagonistic voices from the other side, helping explain why cross-cutting exposure may not only depolarize by opening up echo chambers but also polarize, as a recent literature review shows (van Eck et al., 2026). Fourthly, journalistic work often foregrounds problems over solutions, whereas constructive, solutions-oriented approaches offer alternatives for covering social challenges (Bro, 2024).This framework informs a future research agenda to systematically test both the polarizing effects of these practices and the potential of depolarizing interventions across political and media systems.

POL13 Journalism and Polarization: Fueling the Fire and How To Tame It

PN 52 When polarization becomes news: Cross-national trends in talk about polarization across five European countries, 2020–2025

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This work maps the extent to which polarization is evoked as a narrative element across newspapers in five European countries. Polarization is not only a label for political dynamics; it is also a recurring topic in journalism and part of a wider discourse. News frequently frames events through the lens of "a polarized society," using polarization as a diagnosis, warning, or explanation (Farjam et al., 2025). This matters because research on "false polarization" shows that audiences often misperceive political opponents as more extreme and more hostile than they actually are (Fernbach & Van Boven, 2022). A polarization frame may fuel such misperceptions by foregrounding conflict as the default lens for interpreting politics. Yet we still know comparatively little about how this polarization discourse evolves across Europe: whether it is becoming more common, how it is emotionally framed, and whether it differs from outlets' average ideological stance. We analyze polarization discourse in Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Spain, and Poland between 2020 and 2025. The country selection spans different media systems and historical backgrounds, allowing us to assess whether patterns travel beyond single-country contexts. We analyze a corpus of more than 100,000 newspaper articles that use polarization-related keywords. We draw from multiple outlets per country, selected to maximize ideological variety and to cover both broadsheets and tabloids. We characterize discourse on polarization along three dimensions. First, volume/salience: we compile a country-specific list of polarization terms, starting from the seed word 'polarization' in each language and expanding it with semantically similar expressions identified via word embeddings. We then track how often outlets use this vocabulary over time. Second, emotionality: using pre-trained emotion classifiers, we estimate an 'anger premium', defined as how much anger-related language increases as the use of polarization-related keywords increases within an article. Third, we introduce the concept of an 'ideology premium' that mirrors the same logic for ideological positioning: how much more ideologically extreme stances become as keyword use increases. To compute this premium, we combine computational topic modeling with stance detection: topic models (BERTopic) identify fine-grained issue contexts within polarization discourse, and stance models (large language models validated against human coders) classify directional positions toward the topic of an article. The ideology-premium analysis is ongoing; complete results will be presented at the conference. Thus far, the paper offers three core contributions. First, polarization discourse is on the rise across countries over the observation window, and this increase is not confined to any single media-system type. The discourse is more common in left-leaning than in right-leaning newspapers, and in broadsheets than in tabloids. Second, the anger premium is remarkably consistent: polarization discourse tends to be emotionally intensified relative to outlets' baseline style, even

in media environments typically described as less polarized. Third, by measuring emotional and ideological intensification as premia relative to each outlet's own baseline, the approach distinguishes stable outlet "tone" from changes that are specific to polarization discourse.

POL13 Journalism and Polarization: Fueling the Fire and How To Tame It

PN 53 From antagonistic talk to cooperative acts: An experiment on polarization cues in news and their effects on attitudes and cross-partisan behavior

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This work tests whether polarization meta-discourse actually polarizes audiences. As demonstrated in presentation 2, references to a 'deeply polarized society' have become a routine journalistic device in many European broadsheets. Yet it remains unclear whether such polarization talk merely describes social division or actively produces it among audiences. Building on false polarization theory, i.e., misperceptions of partisan distance that can become self-fulfilling (Fernbach & Van Boven, 2022), this paper tests whether brief polarization contextualizations embedded in otherwise factual reporting shift both (a) perceived polarization and (b) behavior toward political out-groups. We report two laboratory experiments conducted in Germany (Study 1: N = 302; Study 2: N = 295). Participants read two authentic newspaper articles that either included or omitted short contextual sentences framing the reported issue as evidence of broader societal polarization. The manipulation was designed to be subtle and ecologically valid, mirroring how such clauses appear in everyday journalism. After exposure, participants completed standard measures of affective polarization (in-group vs. out-group feeling thermometers) and ideological extremity (distance from neutrality across three salient policy items: migration, climate policy, and redistribution). To capture whether attitudinal shifts translate into consequential action, participants then played incentivized economic games with real partners from the ideological out-group: Dictator, Ultimatum, and Trust Games. These games systematically vary in the mutual dependence between the two players, allowing us to test whether interdependence moderates how polarization narratives affect cross-partisan cooperation. Across both studies, exposure to polarization cues increased self-reported affective polarization and ideological extremity, consistent with the logic of false polarization. Behavioral outcomes, however, were contingent on the structure of interaction. In the Dictator Game—where one-sided allocation is possible, and the partner cannot respond—treated participants kept more of the endowment, aligning behavior with heightened out-group hostility. In the Trust Game—where gains depend on reciprocal trust and cooperation—treated participants sent more to out-group partners, and the receiving counterpart reciprocated more. This suggests that participants who perceived society as more polarized but were simultaneously made aware of their dependence on members of the opposing ideological camp, send a cooperative counter-signal rather than comply with a conflict script presented in the media. Behavior in the Ultimatum Game fell in between these patterns, mirroring the intermediate position of the game in terms of mutual dependence between the participants. These findings refine expectations about media-induced polarization by showing that polarization narratives can reliably increase perceived division while producing heterogeneous behavioral effects depending on interdependence. Substantively, the results highlight a boundary condition for when divisive rhetoric is most likely to undermine democratic life, and when it may instead activate norms of reciprocity or collaboration that sustain societal cooperation in times of increasing polarization.

POL13 Journalism and Polarization: Fueling the Fire and How To Tame It

PN 54 Mapping ideological alignment in contentious arenas: Topic modeling and stance detection in German newspapers, 2020–2024

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Legacy journalism is often assumed to fuel discursive polarization when outlets become ideologically aligned with political camps, i.e., systematically selecting, emphasizing, and evaluating issues in ways that reinforce 'two-camp' perceptions. In the panel's framework (Presentation 1), such ideological/partisan alignment is one of the key journalistic practices that can plausibly intensify polarization dynamics (Fiorina & Abrams, 2008; Druckman et al., 2013). Yet empirical evidence that directly maps how strongly legacy outlets align ideologically, and whether such alignment is stable across issues, remains limited outside highly aligned media environments (Lane et al., 2025).This paper examines ideological alignment in German legacy news between 2020 and 2024. Germany is an informative test case because it combines a multi-party political space with comparatively institutionalized legacy journalism and lower political parallelism, where strong, stable alignment should be less pronounced than in hyperpartisan systems. We analyze a corpus of >12,000 articles from eight mainstream outlets selected for ideological diversity. Substantively, we focus on major arenas of political conflict (Mau et al., 2023)—migration, diversity/gender, climate change, and distributional conflict—and add the Israel–Gaza war as a salient foreign-policy and identity-related conflict since 2023.Methodologically, we propose a scalable way to assess ideological alignment as an issue-sensitive phenomenon rather than a fixed outlet trait. First, we identify fine-grained sub-issues within each arena via topic modeling, allowing us to measure which outlets emphasize which parts of each conflict arena. Second, we estimate topic-specific evaluative direction using large language models, calibrated and validated against two trained human coders

on a balanced validation set (ordinal Krippendorff's α around 0.8, with LLM–coder agreement comparable to coder–coder). This design separates agenda emphasis (what is covered) from directional positioning (how it is evaluated), which are often conflated when diagnosing partisan alignment in journalism. The findings qualify simple expectations about 'aligned' outlets. Some arenas show recognizable clustering into left-leaning and right-leaning blocs when aggregated across topics, consistent with the idea of ideological alignment. However, this bloc structure weakens markedly once we disaggregate by arena and especially by sub-issue: outlets that appear aligned in one arena diverge in others, and within-bloc disagreement is substantial on several contested sub-issues. Migration and Israel–Gaza-related coverage stand out in overall salience, yet engagement is not uniformly concentrated in 'extreme' outlets, and these outlets are not always the ones taking the most consistently directional stances. Overall, the paper contributes an empirically grounded, computational map of when ideological alignment holds and when it breaks down in legacy journalism, thereby linking a central mechanism in the panel's framework (ideological alignment as a potentially polarizing practice) to concrete, issue-specific patterns of coverage and evaluation.

POL13 Journalism and Polarization: Fueling the Fire and How To Tame It

PN 55 Between observation and intervention: Journalists' role perceptions in polarized public debate in four European countries

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Building on the conceptual framework of polarizing and depolarizing journalistic practices introduced in the first paper of this panel, this paper examines how journalists themselves perceive their role in processes of political polarization. Drawing on semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 18 journalists across four countries with different political and media systems and different levels of political polarization (Poland, Sweden, Germany, and Spain), the study adopts a comparative qualitative design to explore how role perceptions vary across these contexts. The analysis is guided by research on journalistic role performance and cultures of journalism, particularly the distinction between detached (reporting reality) and interventionist (journalistic voice: opinions, interpretations, suggestions) role conceptions (Mellado, 2015; 2025), as well as by scholarship on political parallelism and external pluralism in European media systems (Mancini, 2012). Against this theoretical background, the paper examines how journalists interpret polarization, assess their professional responsibilities, and reflect on editorial routines and practices that may amplify or constrain polarized public debate. The findings show that journalists across contexts largely reject intentional polarization as a professional goal, yet differ markedly in how they evaluate the legitimacy of intervention, emotionalization, and contextualization in political reporting. These differences correspond to both nationally embedded journalistic cultures and media-system characteristics, and resonate with the polarizing practices identified in Paper 1, in particular the reproduction of conflict, the privileging of antagonistic voices, and the framing of political debate as a binary opposition. Beyond identifying cross-national differences in role conceptions, the analysis shows how journalists' high degree of reflexivity regarding polarizing practices coexists with a limited sense of professional agency, as polarization is experienced primarily as an outcome of structural pressures, platform dynamics, and the communication of political actors rather than as a product of deliberate journalistic intent. By linking journalists' self-understandings to these practices, the paper advances a comparative perspective on journalism's ambivalent role in sustaining or mitigating harmful forms of polarization in contemporary European public spheres.

POL14 Cross-Cutting Exposure and Affective Polarization

PP 0568 Polarization as a media signal: How polarized issue coverage shapes perceived issue importance and vote choice

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Political polarization is widely perceived as one of the defining features of contemporary democracies. Citizens increasingly report that politics feels more divided, conflictual, and emotionally charged, and media coverage frequently presents political issues in polarized, camp-based terms (so-called affective polarization). While a growing literature documents the prevalence of polarized discourse in news and on social media, much less is known about how such polarization in media content affects citizens' political priorities and electoral decisions. This paper integrates agenda-setting and priming perspectives with polarization research to examine whether issues framed as polarized in media coverage become more important to voters and exert a stronger influence on vote choice.

We conceptualize polarization not merely as ideological distance or affective hostility, but as a communicative signal embedded in media coverage. When journalists, politicians, and online users frame issues as conflicts between opposing camps, they do more than highlight disagreement: they signal that an issue is politically consequential, identity-relevant,

and normatively charged. Building on agenda-setting theory, we argue that such polarized framing increases the perceived importance of issues beyond what can be explained by their sheer visibility. Drawing on priming theory, we further argue that polarized issue coverage increases the likelihood that these issues are used as criteria in political judgment, thereby shaping vote choice.

We test these expectations using a unique five-wave panel survey conducted in the run-up to the 2025 Dutch parliamentary elections (N = 3,000 in wave 1 and 2,461 in wave 5). The panel includes repeated measures of vote intention, vote considerations, and political attitudes, as well as both closed and open-ended most important problem (MIP) questions that capture issue salience from the citizen's perspective. These individual-level data are linked to a large-scale content analysis of the news and social media content respondents were exposed to, based on a combination of data donations (e.g., browsing and social media traces) and detailed self-reported media use. Using large language models, we automatically classify the issues present in each respondent's media diet and estimate the degree to which these issues are framed in polarized terms. Linkage analysis then connects individual exposure profiles to within-person changes in issue salience and voting considerations over time.

Preliminary analyses provide evidence for our theoretical expectations. First, issues that are more strongly framed as polarized in a respondent's media exposure are significantly more likely to be mentioned as most important problems in subsequent waves. Crucially, this effect persists when controlling for the overall volume of coverage, indicating that polarization adds to, rather than merely reflects, classic agenda-setting effects. Second, polarized issue salience translates into electoral relevance: issues that respondents encounter in more polarized form are more strongly associated with their party preferences (through issue ownership mechanisms) and voting intentions than issues covered in a less conflictual manner. This pattern remains robust in models that account for prior vote intentions and ideological predispositions.

Together, these findings suggest that polarization is not just an outcome of political competition but also a mechanism through which media structure political attention and choice.

POL14 Cross-Cutting Exposure and Affective Polarization

PP 0569 How can echo chambers emerge in curated facebook feeds? Simulating cross-cutting information sharing in a Danish context

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Public and academic debates often claim that social media push citizens into ideological echo chambers that fuel polarization. Yet evidence is mixed: studies of individual exposure frequently find substantial diversity, while network-level analyses on platforms such as Facebook show strong homophily and clustering. This tension raises a methodological challenge for political communication research: how exposure in social media environments and user sharing jointly produce system-level patterns of segregation and polarization.

To address this challenge, we develop a theory-driven agent-based model (ABM) that simulates how users are exposed to and share political information on social media platforms. Agents hold a continuous political orientation and differ in key behavioral traits: their propensity to post original content, their likelihood of sharing attitude-aligned content versus cross-cutting content, their tolerance for disagreement (an attitude-distance threshold that defines when content is experienced as "aligned"), and their volatility (how strongly exposure shifts their orientation). In each time step, agents may produce original content, receive an exposure set consisting of content shared by accounts they follow (a simplified proxy for feed exposure), and selectively re-share items. Agents update their political orientation as a function of the aggregate mix of exposures, producing emergent outcomes such as clustering, segregation between communities, and changes in cross-cutting exposure over time. The model thus treats segregation between communities and polarization shifts as emergent consequences of repeated micro-level exposure, selective sharing, and updating.

We evaluate the ABM against a large-scale Danish Facebook dataset. Using ~48 million posts collected via snowball sampling of news-media URL sharing (2019–2024), we map diffusion dynamics across interaction-based page communities, which allows us to derive empirical validation targets (e.g., segregation between communities, cross-community diffusion distributions, and cross-cutting engagement patterns). In addition, the Facebook data are used to delineate empirically plausible ranges of network structures (e.g., degree heterogeneity and the strength of community structure). We then run systematic parameter sweeps across behavioral heterogeneity and network environments to identify the configurations that reproduce observed network-level patterns.

Our contribution is twofold. Substantively, the study clarifies which echo-chamber configurations are compatible with observed patterns of cross-cutting engagement in a Nordic, multi-party context. Rather than asking whether echo chambers "exist" in the abstract, we specify the conditions under which they are more or less likely to arise in curated Facebook feeds. Methodologically, we demonstrate how platform data can be used to validate ABMs of political communication by linking individual-level mechanisms to macro-level outcomes in contemporary platform-mediated publics.

POL14 Cross-Cutting Exposure and Affective Polarization

PP 0570 Cross-cutting exposure revisited: A story-level analysis of political news consumption across 6 countries

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Concerns about online political "echo chambers" have made the ideological diversity of news diets a central question in political communication. However, recent research has cast doubt on how much ideological self-selection actually occurs online. Using individual-level digital trace data, studies have found that people typically consume news from a diverse range of sites (Guess, 2021), and even audiences of hyperpartisan outlets still engage substantially with mainstream sources (de Leon et al., 2024). Some have concluded that social media increases, rather than reduces, exposure diversity (Stier et al., 2022; Jürgens & Stark, 2022).

Most of this work relies on domain-level ideological scoring: assigning a fixed ideological label to entire websites. This method treats every story from, say, The New York Times as uniformly left-leaning, counting any visit as left-leaning exposure. But emerging scholarship suggests this is a flawed proxy (Mangold et al 2024). Goel et al. (2024) highlight how mainstream news stories are often co-opted in disinformation campaigns. De Leon et al. (2025) describe how ideological actors amplify stories from credible (but ideologically opposed) sources to bolster their own narratives, a process they term "weaponized information." Greene et al. (2024) show that elites often share content from ideologically distant outlets not because they agree with it, but because it suits their framing.

These findings suggest domain-level measures may substantially overstate ideological diversity. In response, we introduce a story-level approach: instead of labeling entire domains, we infer the ideological valence of each individual story. We do this by calculating scores based on the partisan leanings of political elites who share them, using a method developed by Eady et al. (2024).

Our study draws on two datasets across six countries: Spain, France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the USA. The first includes 94,613 URLs shared by political elites on Facebook and X, used to infer ideological positioning. The second is individual-level web-tracking data from over 7,000 individuals across all countries, capturing actual online news consumption and ideological exposure.

Initial analyses confirm that domain-level scoring masks substantial variation within sites. Among 12,000 stories accessed by users and shared by elites, we observe significant ideological spread. For instance, while The New York Times has an average ideological score of 4.7 (on a 0–10 left-right scale), individual stories reach up to 8.2. This suggests some stories are mobilized by right-wing elites, meaning their consumption by conservatives should not be classified as "cross-cutting" exposure.

The paper proceeds by estimating how domain-level scoring overstates exposure diversity. This helps provide a more accurate and nuanced understanding of ideological segregation in online news consumption across six Western democracies.

POL14 Cross-Cutting Exposure and Affective Polarization

PP 0571 Affective polarization and epistemological beliefs: Audiences beyond journalism

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Over the past decade, research has increasingly focused on political polarization as an alarming phenomenon that helps explain the fundamental problems that democracy is facing today. Whereas polarization was initially understood in issue-based terms that reflected ideological divide between political groups, research has since also recognized *affective polarization*, marked by growing dislike and distrust between members of opposing political parties, (Iyengar et al., 2019, 2012). The concept denotes an emotional form of division, characterized by antagonistic "us" versus "them" distinctions constructed between individuals who disagree on societal issues (Iyengar et al., 2019). Affective polarization tends to be context-dependent, in that social media use can intensify it, particularly in established democracies (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021; Lorenz-Spreen et al., 2023). Political polarization has been analysed, for instance, through the fourfold model, which examines the phenomenon along the dimensions of ideology, affect, morality, and epistemology (Lehtonen & Ylä-Anttila, 2024). Within this framework, the interaction between affective and epistemic polarization suggests that information environments can become embedded in political identity: affective polarization intensifies (typically negative) emotions towards out-groups, while epistemic polarization heightens dispute over facts, knowledge, and information sources (ibid.). The growing academic attention to polarization has also drawn criticism. Political polarization has been associated with the global crisis of democracy, but only with little consensus about its meaning and with a range of different subtypes being introduced (Schedler, 2023). Roch et al. (2026) introduce the notion of a *mainstream polarization narrative*, arguing that polarization functions less as a neutral description of political developments and more as a constructed frame that shapes our understanding of the world. This study examines whether affective polarization plays a role when audiences engage with epistemic sources beyond mainstream journalism. By "beyond mainstream journalism" I refer to the emerging

range of other types of epistemic actors serving as news and information brokers, including content curators such as social media commentators, political figures, public discussion groups, and news influencers (Mayerhöffer et al., 2024). Drawing on semi-structured in-depth interviews (N ≈ 20) with users following such new epistemic actors in Finland, the study investigates whether affective polarization is discernible both in the perceptions and behavior of audiences. The study explores whether audiences recognize and assign value to affective experiences in their choices of consuming certain media, epistemic source, or news provider. Moreover, it examines whether these experiences align with and potentially shape their epistemological beliefs. The interviewees include audiences of both politically active and non-active podcasters, alternative media producers, bloggers, writers, and activists active in Finland.

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POL15 Polarization in News Media and Public Discourse

PP 0689 The ideology of lifestyle: A large-scale analysis of cross-ideological engagement in non-political digital spaces

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Political affective polarization and a lack of cross-ideological discussion and tolerance and seen as increasingly pressing issues in Western democracies. In political communication research, online discussion spaces such as newspaper comment sections and blogs are studied because they both represent and shape how cross-ideological discussions take place. However, most research has focused on news comment sections or politician's pages where political talk is more likely to emerge. Apart from a few recent exceptions, political talk outside of political spaces has been understudied, especially from a cross-platform perspective. This is an important gap, given that cross-ideological talk may be more likely in online spaces where ideological identities are less salient. On the other hand, lifestyle enclaves make it plausible that users in non-political spaces are as or even more segregated than those who take part on discussions on the YouTube channels of news organizations or comment on a politician's Facebook page.

This study addresses this gap by asking three key, interrelated questions: 1) Is political talk more ideologically diverse in non-political spaces (e.g. Taylor Swift's Facebook page or r/gaming) than in news and politics (e.g. Facebook page of Bernie Sanders or r/Democrats)? 2) What kind of non-political topics are more likely to yield cross-ideological discussions? 3) Are there platform differences in how political discussions cluster ideologically in non-political spaces? To answer these questions, I collect and analyze 45.9 million comments from 463 Facebook Pages, 421 subreddits, and 312 YouTube channels. I then use state of the art BERT-NLP machine learning classifiers (Krippendorff's Alpha > . 67) to identify if these comments contain political talk and, if so, if they lean ideologically left, right or have a neutral or balanced perspective.

Results show that, in general, non-political spaces are not significantly more or less cross-cutting than political spaces, with the exception of non-profit and activism pages/subreddits/channels, which tend to be less ideologically diverse than news and politics. A fine-grained analysis shows that cross-ideological engagement tends to happen on left-leaning spaces, which are commented by both sides of the political spectrum, while left leaning users seldom comment on right-wing pages, channels or subreddits. Within non-political spaces, cross-ideological talk happens mostly on pages related to comedy and humor. Pages related to politically loaded lifestyle aspects, such as veganism or atheism lean left, while sports pages and certain types on entertainment (e.g. wrestling) lean right. In terms of platform variation, different platforms seem to lead to the emergence of varied political and non-political enclaves. On Reddit, left-wing enclaves emerge on non-political topics, but on YouTube the same takes place on the other end of the spectrum. While ideological enclaves exist on Facebook, they tend to happen mostly on political pages, sometimes counterintuitively. For instance, the Facebook page of Kamala Harris is a right-wing enclave, because it is mostly commented by opposition users disparaging her views.

This research is limited to English language content, making it US centric. Nonetheless, it shed light on non-political spaces as a meaningful contributor for cross-ideological talk, following platform specific dynamics.

POL15 Polarization in News Media and Public Discourse

PP 0690 Measuring ideological discursive polarization among German newspapers through a combination of topic modeling and LLM-based stance detection

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Public debates—and Western societies more generally—are widely perceived as drifting apart. Yet longitudinal evidence that demonstrates how media debates diverge across issues and evaluations remains limited, especially in contexts where polarization is not fully institutionalized. Building on discursive polarization theory, this paper focuses on ideological discursive polarization: the idea that debates "break apart" when news actors increasingly emphasize different issue elements and attach systematically different directional evaluations to them, reducing shared discursive ground.

We introduce and validate a computational pipeline that makes this construct measurable directly from news content. The approach combines inductive issue discovery with topic-specific stance estimation and then quantifies how far outlets separate in a multidimensional discourse space. We demonstrate the method in Germany—often characterized as a democratic-corporatist media system with comparatively high journalistic professionalism and lower political parallelism—making it an informative setting to assess whether content-based polarization measurement can detect meaningful divergence even outside strongly aligned systems.

Empirically, we analyze a corpus of roughly 12,000 newspaper articles (2020–2024) from eight mainstream outlets spanning left-leaning and right-leaning camps. The corpus targets four "arenas of conflict" central to contemporary German debates—migration, gender/diversity, climate change, and the Israel–Gaza war as a salient foreign-policy/identity conflict since 2023—identified through broad, arena-level Boolean queries expanded via distributional semantics to avoid pre-structuring the corpus along ideological lines.

Methodologically, the workflow proceeds in five steps: (1) BERTopic recovers fine-grained issues and topic probabilities per article; (2) a large language model (gpt-oss:120b) classifies topic-specific stance on an ordinal scale (-1/0/+1) from stratified samples of high-probability articles per outlet–topic; (3) salience and stance are combined into stance-weighted outlet vectors that locate outlets in a K-dimensional ideological discourse space; (4) cosine distances quantify ideological divergence within and between outlet groups; and (5) the most polarizing topics are identified as those that maximize cross-outlet distance within the learned space. The stance component is formally validated against two trained coders (ordinal Krippendorff's $\alpha \approx 0.78$ for model–human coder agreement; human coder–coder $\alpha \approx 0.78$), supporting its use as an automated coder.

Overall, the paper contributes a transferable, inductive measurement strategy for ideological discursive polarization that does not require pre-defined issue lists or a fixed one-dimensional ideology scale. By recovering issue structure and evaluative separation from the corpus, the pipeline yields comparable, scalable estimates of discursive divergence and pinpoints the concrete topics driving it—turning an otherwise abstract theoretical claim about "debates breaking apart" into a reproducible set of estimators for computational communication research.

POL15 Polarization in News Media and Public Discourse

PP 0691 Media as a catalyst for polarization? Understanding the influence of (digital) media on affective and perceived polarization

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The relationship between media use and democratic processes has become increasingly important to current societal and academic debates. There has been a strong focus on the role of (social) media in shaping polarization within societies. A key focus here is on affective polarization, defined as the tendency to evaluate one's own group positively and other groups (often political opponents) negatively (Iyengar et al., 2012; Gidron et al., 2020). Additionally, perceived polarization is receiving increased attention, as citizens generally overrate the degree of polarization in their countries and have democratic consequences on its own (Enders & Armaly, 2019).

Previous work suggests that affective polarization may undermine trust in democracy and its institutions (Graham & Svolik, 2020; McCoy & Somer, 2019), though more recent studies report mixed effects on democratic support, ranging from negative associations to null findings (Broockman et al., 2023; Voelkel et al., 2023; Van Remoortere & Vliegenthart, 2024). However, in the literature, traditional and social media are often cited as catalysts of polarization (Kruikemeier & Vliegenthart, 2024).

Nevertheless, a review of the state-of-the-art reveals that important scholarly challenges in understanding these dynamics remain (Kubin & Von Sikorski, 2021). For instance, the existing literature focuses heavily on the United States, and negative narratives about media effects dominate. Research has also focused less on a diverse set of media usage by citizens, which

may differentially impact both affective and perceived polarization. This study addresses these gaps by examining how diverse forms of media use relate to affective polarization and perceptions of polarization.

In the run-up to the national elections in the Netherlands of 2025 and immediately thereafter, we surveyed the same group of respondents five times about their media use, political preferences, and attitudes (N = 3,000 in wave 1, conducted in early September, and N = 2,461 in wave 5, conducted in the week following the election in November). We used a representative sample of the Dutch population.

The findings show nuanced results that challenge dominant assumptions about the polarizing influence of social media. Interestingly, media use plays only a small role in explaining affective polarization, which is largely stable and mainly related to political interest rather than media usage. Hence, social media use shows no significant effects. Media use is, however, more strongly influencing perceived polarization, especially through online news consumption. Commercial television is, conversely, linked to lower perceptions and concerns about polarization. These results highlight the importance of making a difference between actual and perceived polarization and call for more research into how specific (social) media content features impact various forms of polarization

POL15 Polarization in News Media and Public Discourse

PP 0692 Feuding, voting, settling down? Tracing perceived online incivility across four national elections

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How do citizens perceive political incivility on social media, and do these perceptions shift as elections unfold? Perceptions of political incivility matter: they can normalize the erosion of democratic norms, undermine mutual trust, and discourage participation among more moderate, risk-averse citizens. Because incivility is partly "in the eye of the beholder" (Herbst, 2010, p. 3), understanding how citizens perceive norm transgressions and under what conditions these perceptions shift is essential. How citizens experience incivility, however, is further shaped by the medium on which they encounter political information (Sydnor, 2020). Social media platforms, in particular, possess distinct characteristics, such as enabling impulsive and anonymous communication and algorithmically promoting ideological homophily, that can actively foster uncivil discourse (Sude & Dvir-Gvirsman, 2023). Against this background, we examined how perceptions of political incivility on social media changed from pre- to post-election based on country contexts and individual characteristics, drawing on social identity theory and motivated reasoning. Building on and synthesizing previous conceptualizations by, e.g., Muddiman (2017), Papacharissi (2004) and Bentivegna & Rega (2022), we distinguished between *personal-level incivility directed at individuals,* violating politeness norms through, e.g., personal attacks, and *public-level incivility directed at sociopolitical entities,* transgressing against deliberative and democratic norms such as protecting democratic freedoms. Empirically, we utilized a two-wave panel survey with samples representative of age (18+) and gender across four nations (BRA, ESP, SUI, USA; *N = 2908*), reflecting different media and political systems, in the weeks leading to and following their national elections (2022–2024). At the *micro-individual level,* findings suggest that cross-cutting exposure is positively associated with incivility perceptions, whereas post-election increases in affective polarization are linked to decreased perceptions of incivility. Contrary to expectations, electoral *winners* reported higher perceived incivility than losers. Generally, incivility perceptions remained moderately stable and were not strongly predicted by dispositional traits. These results suggest a "desensitization" dynamic: persistent exposure to online incivility may diminish the perceived severity of norm transgressions. At the *macro-national level,* important cross-national variation emerged. In Brazil's highly polarized environment, perceptions of incivility increased post-election, consistent with citizens' heavy social media reliance and intense elite rhetoric surrounding the close outcome. In Spain, perceptions did not shift significantly after the parliamentary elections, possibly reflecting that coalition-building outcomes remained unresolved. In contrast, Switzerland and the United States both saw decreases in perceived incivility. Notably, in three of four countries, personal-level incivility was perceived as more prevalent than public-level incivility, with Spain as the exception. These divergent findings suggest that incivility perceptions are primarily shaped by meso- and macro-level factors, specifically the national political context and its electoral landscape. Taken together, our study advances current scholarship on political incivility perceptions and their interaction with factors at the micro, meso and macro levels. Ultimately, the findings highlight the importance of preserving deliberative spaces that safeguard democratic norms, especially in an environment where the public may become desensitized to incivility.

POL16 Navigating the Post-Truth Frontier: Quality of Political Communication and Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe

PN 59 Quality political communication in the age of disorder: Comparing actors' perceptions in Poland, Canada, the UK, and France

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The political actors directly responsible for creating public messages conceptualize the notion of "quality" within the tension of deliberation and efficacy (Coleman & Blumler 2009). While recent scholarship has extensively analyzed communication effects on audiences (Stier et al. 2018; Dimitrova et al., 2011; Pennycook & Rand, 2019), there remains a notable lack of insight into how politicians themselves define the criteria for high-quality, trustworthy interaction within a destabilized information environment. Consequently, this study aims to investigate how politicians across the examined countries perceive political communication and which specific elements of their messaging are intended to foster trust among voters. This research examines the internal standards that practitioners use to evaluate their own work and the perceived effectiveness of various communicative strategies in creating a credible public image. This study draws on an ambitious, ongoing cross-national research project, „PODTRUST," that involves 200 semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDIs) with political practitioners and members of the public in Poland, Canada, the United Kingdom, and France. The analysis identifies specific communication formats, message types, and content structures that practitioners believe are essential for fostering institutional trust and building resilience against manipulation. By comparing the perspectives of actors from a Central and Eastern European (CEE) context with those from transatlantic democracies, the paper explores whether a universal standard of communicative excellence is emerging or if professional ethics remain tied to specific political cultures. The results suggest that high-quality communication serves as a strategic defense against non-constructive processes, such as polarization and disinformation. By examining the practitioners' viewpoint, the study highlights how transparency, consistency, and professionalized content structures are perceived as vital tools for maintaining voter engagement. Methodologically, the scale of this qualitative study presents a rare opportunity to examine the internal logic and strategic choices of political creators, offering a nuanced perspective on the future of democratic deliberation and the practical mechanisms of trust-building in contemporary politics.

POL16 Navigating the Post-Truth Frontier: Quality of Political Communication and Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe

PN 60 Journalism quality across Central and Eastern Europe: Autonomy and journalistic roles

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This presentation explores findings from the Worlds of Journalism Study, focusing on journalism quality in Central and Eastern Europe. This study examines key dimensions of journalistic professionalism in selected Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, taking into account their shared historical and political legacies. It examines how professional autonomy, news verification practices, and strategies to counter fake news shape journalistic roles in polarized societies. The discussion highlights comparative insights from the third wave of research and reflects challenges and future directions for journalism in the region. Data from the Worlds of Journalism Study (WJS3) show that Latvian journalists report a high degree of perceived professional autonomy: 82.9% indicate full freedom in selecting stories and 87.9% in emphasizing particular aspects of them. At the same time, only 39.4% believe that media freedom is fully realized in Latvia. Previous research has identified the coexistence of three competing journalistic cultures in Latvia, differentiated by their approach to accountability (Dimants, 2018): a traditional Russian journalism culture in ethnic minority media; an instrumental, post-Soviet culture marked by political and economic dependence; and a professional culture oriented toward high ethical standards and editorial autonomy. While Latvian journalists overwhelmingly endorse the roles of detached observer and watchdog and emphasize the importance of professional ethics, survey data also reveal internal contradictions. More than half of journalists consider ethical decisions to be a matter of personal judgment, and around one third agree that ethical standards may be suspended under extraordinary circumstances. At the same time, Latvian journalists perceive commercial rather than political pressures as the dominant influence on their work (Rožukalne, 2020). The need to reconcile professional values with market imperatives and responsibility for organizational performance fosters self-censorship and conformism in journalistic practice (Schimpfössl et al., 2020; Rožukalne, 2020). More broadly, Latvia and the Baltic States are often

analysed within the wider CEE context, without sufficient attention to their specific historical media cultures. Research on post-socialist media systems has highlighted persistent challenges, including political influence, insufficient funding of public service media, clientelistic relations with sources, and ethical dilemmas (Balčytienė, 2012; Balčytienė, 2015; Dobek-Ostrowska, 2015; Örnebring, 2012; Bajomi-Lázár, 2015; Dimants, 2018). Jakubowicz (2004) critically questions the application of Western normative benchmarks to CEE media, arguing that processes of imitation and mimetic development have led to hybrid media systems in which elements of "old" and "new" logics coexist. As a result, attempts to replicate Western media models have often failed to overcome path-dependent, "atavistic" patterns of media development in CEE countries (Gross, 2004).

POL16 Navigating the Post-Truth Frontier: Quality of Political Communication and Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe

PN 61 The destabilising impact of media politicisation on journalist employment security in Central and Eastern Europe

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This study investigates the intersection of political influence and the professional stability of journalists in Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Over the last decade, these Central and Eastern European (CEE) nations have experienced significant structural shifts marked by increased state interference in the media sector. Using a secondary data analysis of academic literature, legal documents, and detailed press reports, this research examines how political pressures actively reshape the working conditions and autonomy of media professionals. To establish a solid analytical framework, the research applies an interdisciplinary model combining insights from security studies, organizational psychology, labor economics, and law. This approach is specifically tailored to the institutional realities of CEE media systems, where the transition toward democratic standards remains an ongoing challenge. The findings indicate that political interventions have systematically undermined employment security by replacing professional merit with political loyalty as the primary criterion for career longevity. The impact of this trend goes beyond individual job precariousness. The erosion of journalistic independence fundamentally degrades the quality of political communication. As newsrooms are pressured to adopt partisan narratives, their capacity to facilitate objective public discourse is severely diminished. This research demonstrates that when job security depends on political subservience, the flow of information becomes distorted, which in turn reduces transparency and prevents citizens from making truly informed decisions. Ultimately, the politicization of media employment does not just threaten professional standards; it weakens the very foundations of the democratic order. By exploring these internal labor dynamics, this study directly addresses the themes of the panel, illustrating how professional vulnerability in journalism serves as a critical entry point for disinformation and the erosion of truth in the region.

POL16 Navigating the Post-Truth Frontier: Quality of Political Communication and Disinformation Resilience in Central and Eastern Europe

PN 62 The spiral of silence in Poland's security debate: Public opinion on military involvement in Ukraine

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This presentation examines the phenomenon of the spiral of silence in Polish political discourse through the lens of one of the most pressing security questions facing Central and Eastern Europe: the potential deployment of Polish troops to Ukraine. Drawing on a representative CATI survey of 1,100 adult Poles conducted in May 2025 by the Laboratory of Media Studies at the University of Warsaw, this study reveals critical insights into how citizens navigate controversial political topics in an increasingly polarized information environment. The survey consisted of a form concerning the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, as well as the main part, divided into six short cafeteria questions. The research demonstrates that while 65% of Poles oppose sending troops to the Ukrainian-Russian border, and nearly 60% believe the majority shares their position, only 52% would be willing to express this opinion publicly to strangers. This gap between private conviction and public expression exemplifies Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann's (1974) spiral of silence theory, wherein individuals withhold opinions they perceive as unpopular due to fear of social isolation. The findings reveal significant demographic variations: men express stronger certainty about both their positions and perceived social consensus, while women demonstrate greater caution and ambivalence. Age and education also emerge as differentiating factors in willingness to engage in controversial political discussions. These (and other) results of the study illuminate fundamental challenges to deliberative democracy in the CEE region. The reluctance to openly discuss contentious security issues- even when respondents hold firm private opinions- suggests a communicative environment where political polarization inhibits genuine public debate. This self-censorship dynamic creates fertile ground for echo chambers and allows dominant media narratives to operate unchallenged, ultimately distorting the public sphere's representative function. The study contributes to understanding disinformation resilience by demonstrating how the quality of political communication is undermined not only by external manipulation but also by internal psychological mechanisms that discourage citizens from participating in

democratic deliberation. In the CEE context, where historical experiences with authoritarianism have created particular sensitivities around political expression, these patterns may be especially pronounced. The research – which will be discussed in the broader context of similar studies (eg. Badora 2025, Dojwa-Turczyńska 2023, also IPSOS and CBOS studies, as well as Eurobarometer reports of 2025)- suggests that strengthening democratic discourse requires not only combating false information but also addressing the social and psychological barriers that prevent citizens from engaging authentically with controversial topics. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing communication strategies that can rebuild trust and encourage genuine political participation in the post-truth era.

POL17 Propaganda, Telegram, and Algorithmic Information Warfare

PP 0684 The laziness of the crowd: Selective attention among raters risks undermining the efficacy of X's community notes program

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Crowdsourced moderation systems such as X's Community Notes program have emerged as promising alternatives to professional fact-checkers for combating online misinformation at scale. While prior research has examined the effectiveness of such systems in reducing engagement with false content and their vulnerability to partisan bias and coordinated manipulation, we identify a previously untested mechanism linking claim plausibility to systematic non-participation by crowdsourced raters. We hypothesize that claims requiring less cognitive effort to evaluate, specifically those that are obviously false and easy to refute, are more likely to receive public notes than claims that are more plausible and require greater cognitive effort to debunk.

Our theoretical framework draws on dual-process theories of cognition and extends Pennycook and Rand's (2019) influential "lazy, not biased" account of misinformation susceptibility to the fact-checking process itself. Just as individuals may accept plausible misinformation due to insufficient cognitive engagement, we propose that raters in crowdsourced systems may be less likely to invest the effort required to evaluate and rate notes addressing nuanced false claims. This represents an extension of the cognitive miser framework from individual news consumption to collective fact-checking behavior, revealing what we term the "laziness of the crowd."

Using two years of vaccine-related Community Notes data comprising 2,865 posts and crowdsourced believability ratings from 382 survey participants, we test whether the perceived plausibility of false claims predicts the likelihood of proposed notes achieving "helpful" status. We focus on COVID-19 vaccine misinformation as a least-likely case for effort avoidance given the topic's high salience and moral charge. These are conditions under which motivated engagement should be maximal. Our design allows us to distinguish plausibility effects from partisan bias by collecting ratings across the political spectrum and controlling for respondent characteristics.

Results confirm our hypotheses across all three measured dimensions. Posts rated as more personally believable were significantly less likely to receive notes (OR = 0.89, p = .034), with highly believable posts showing a 34% relative reduction in note probability compared to implausible posts. Effects were stronger for perceived audience believability (OR = 0.84, p = .003, representing a 48% relative reduction) and strongest for fact-checking difficulty (OR = 0.80, p < .001, representing a 56% relative reduction). Posts rated as most difficult to fact-check had only a 4% probability of receiving a note compared to 9% for those rated easiest, representing a halving of an already rare outcome.

These findings reveal a fundamental tension in crowdsourced content moderation with significant implications for moderation efforts and broader political communication strategies for managing potentially harmful online content. Our findings suggest that one of the most dangerous misinformation, plausible claims that can readily deceive audiences, may be precisely the content least likely to receive corrective annotations. As Community Notes-style systems spread to other large platforms such as YouTube, Meta, and TikTok as replacements for human moderators, understanding these cognitive constraints becomes increasingly urgent for democratic discourse. We conclude by proposing design interventions including hybrid routing systems, differential incentive structures, and automated nudges to mitigate plausibility bias in crowdsourced moderation.

POL17 Propaganda, Telegram, and Algorithmic Information Warfare

PP 0685 Algorithmic deceptions: An LLM-assisted analysis of Russian propaganda curation on search engines

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The influence of Russian propaganda on global public discourse has been a major concern for democratic societies, particularly since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. However, despite a plethora of literature on Russian digital propaganda, we

still lack a comprehensive account of how online platforms manage problematic content produced by the Kremlin and how their algorithms shape information environments where users are exposed to propaganda-related topics. To remedy this limitation, our paper uses a mixed-method approach, combining agent-based algorithmic audit and large language model (LLM)-assisted content analysis to process a large multilingual set of data of search engines' performance in the context of Russian propaganda. We compare the world's most used search engines Google, Bing, Yandex, and DuckDuckGo in six countries (USA, India, Qatar, Brazil, Poland, Germany), which are to various degrees targeted by the Russian propaganda campaigns, and use a structured corpus of propaganda statements based on dimensionality analysis translated into nine languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Hindi, Polish, Arabic, Russian, and Ukrainian). Our preliminary analysis highlights the profound impact of language, search query phrasing, and topic of search on the outputs, which has major implications for the algorithmic information curation and the selection of outputs resulting from it. Particularly, we notice a concerning drop in the quality of sources retrieved by search engines when users search for propaganda-related topics, which varies across individual search engines. This shows how the phrasing of propaganda-related queries can fundamentally change the type of information environment on search engines and result in different exposure to propaganda content. Moreover, our analysis shows that Russian propaganda has a strong influence on what political knowledge users are exposed to with some queries related to the most common Russian propaganda frames, such as anti-Western and anti-EU messaging messaging, resulting in strongly pro-Russian information environments. This finding is troubling due to search algorithms potentially facilitating the spread of Russian propaganda and doing it in a differentiated manner (thus complicating its detection) and points to the importance of a comprehensive understanding of information environments surrounding critical political topics and the role of algorithmic systems.

We further argue that there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the information environments surrounding critical political issues and of the role algorithmic systems play in shaping them.

POL17 Propaganda, Telegram, and Algorithmic Information Warfare

PP 0686 Telegram contextualized: A comparative study of public Telegram channels in six European countries

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In recent years, Telegram has grown rapidly and attracted the attention of political communication scholars (e.g., Buehling & Heft, 2023). While its use is particularly widespread in parts of the Global South, the platform also plays a growing role in interpersonal communication and news consumption in Europe (Newman et al., 2025).

Existing research shows that Telegram's role varies substantially across different media and political systems (e.g., Urman et al., 2021). Because the platform lacks centralized algorithmic content curation, users' experiences depend largely on which actors are dominant in a given context and on the types of content they produce. However, the lack of systematic comparisons of Telegram environments makes it difficult to contextualize the platform's role for different audience segments.

To address this gap, our study takes a comparative approach and examines the distribution of actor types and the content they produce on Telegram in six European countries with large user bases and differing information environments: Germany, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine. We analyze the most-followed public Telegram channels in each country (n = 6,000), identified through a snowball sampling strategy based on the Telegram API and the Telethon Python library, using country-specific seed lists from Telemetr.io. Linguistic filters and URL-based classification were applied to retain channels intended primarily for the respective national audiences.

The analysis focused on the theoretical dimension of institutional presence, defined as the extent to which a given Telegram segment was dominated by institutional actors—such as governments, public agencies, political parties, and legacy media—rather than by non-institutional actors, including influencers, anonymous individuals, and loosely organized groups. Institutional presence was measured through channel-level actor classification based on manually validated automated content analysis. In addition, we analyzed the dominant topics addressed by each channel to assess how institutional involvement varies across different issue areas. To identify dominant topics, BERTopic was applied to randomly sampled messages from each channel.

Findings show clear cross-national differences in institutional presence and dominant topics. In Ukraine, and to a lesser extent Russia, institutional actors account for a substantially larger share of prominent Telegram channels than elsewhere. In Italy, Turkey, and Serbia, institutional actors are less prominent, and highly followed channels more often focus on commercial, gambling-related, or cryptocurrency-related content. Germany also shows low institutional presence; however, political topics remain prominent and are addressed mainly by non-institutional actors, including journalists speaking in a personal capacity, and influencers. The proposed approach allows one to assess Telegram's political relevance across contexts and the extent to which it reflects the broader information environment or constitutes an alternative ecosystem.

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POL17 Propaganda, Telegram, and Algorithmic Information Warfare

PP 0687 Shifting narratives: A comparative analysis of Ukrainian and Russian policymakers' Telegram communication before and after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine

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This study examines elite-driven political communication on Telegram during the Russo-Ukrainian war, the first large-scale European war in the social media era. We use a unique dataset of all Telegram channels of the current policymakers in Ukraine and Russia and analyze 1,178,231 Telegram public posts from 2019 to 2024. We investigate the changes in the communication volume, thematic content, and actor engagement following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion, combining descriptive statistics and computational text analysis. In particular, we use dynamic topic modelling based on BERTopic with manual topic validation and interpretation by the authors.

First, our findings show a sharp increase in Telegram activity after the invasion, particularly among ruling-party policymakers in both countries. This manifested in the increase in the number of active Telegram channels and the volume of posting. This increase indicates that the invasion has been perceived as a major communication challenge in both countries, prompting policymakers to respond.

Second, the dynamic topic modeling shows that Ukrainian policymakers initially focused on war-related topics together with other news and international relations, however, the emphasis on war declined over time. In contrast, Russian policymakers largely avoided war-related topics, instead emphasizing unrelated news, social and economic issues, as well as crises in the West and historical narratives, which may suggest an effort to distract public attention.

Third, we identify differences in communication strategies between representatives of large and small political parties, as well as individual policymakers. On the party level, we identified differences between large parties engaging with a broad range of topics, and smaller parties specializing in a narrower set of issues, for instance, economy or traditional values. On the individual level, we noted differences depending on the topic: Some topics were led by small groups of policymakers, whereas for other topics the engagement was more diffused across actors.

Our findings provide insights into how elite-driven wartime communication functions online. Specifically, we show that for autocracies, like Russia, it may be easier to streamline governmental communication responses in states of emergency compared to democracies, even when considering the less controlled social media environments. Besides, we demonstrate that while war-related news constitute a part of the policymakers' wartime communication, their discourse is not limited to war-related topics and even may strategically focus on other matters to divert attention. Both in Ukraine and Russia, policymakers continued posting on other topics, from economics and public policies to holiday greetings, thus making the wartime discourse kaleidoscopic, rather than exclusively war-focused or war-evading. Thus, our findings contribute to the literature on mediatization of war and political communication by presenting a unique longitudinal analysis of how policymakers adapt their messaging during wartime. Additionally, this study enhances our understanding of how varying political regimes navigate the communication challenges posed by hybrid warfare. It highlights the importance for democracies to develop comprehensive emergency communication strategies that balance efficiency with the preservation of democratic pluralism, enabling them to effectively confront the more centralized and streamlined communication approaches characteristic of autocracies.

POL17 Propaganda, Telegram, and Algorithmic Information Warfare

PP 0688 Strategic communication in times of conflict: How political violence is justified

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Despite its widespread use, political violence is almost universally rejected from a normative perspective (Sabucedo et al., 2002). This puts pressure on violent actors to justify their actions in order to generate public support and mobilise combatants. While many studies focus on the journalistic coverage of war (e.g. Roman et al., 2017), intrastate conflicts (e.g. Haigh & Bruce, 2017), or terrorism (e.g. Falkheimer & Olsson, 2015), violent actors' strategic communication has attracted limited attention. The existing research points towards differences in legitimation strategies between actors with differing degrees of power, but comparative studies are scarce (e.g. Hamdy & Gomaa, 2012). Thus, the study aims to answer two research questions:

RQ1. Which communication strategies do political actors use to legitimise their violence?
RQ2. To what extent do these communication strategies differ with regard to the types of actors?

The study draws on Beetham's (2013/1991) three-dimensional concept of legitimacy, encompassing observance of established rules, justification by reference to shared beliefs, and demonstrable public consent. The communication strategies derived from this concept are operationalised as legitimation statements consisting of (1) a speaker, (2) an object whose legitimacy is evaluated, (3) the evaluation (positive/negative), and (4) an argument that establishes the criteria on which the evaluation is based (cf. Kleinen-von Königslöw et al., 2019).

To answer the research questions, a quantitative manual content analysis was conducted. The material was sampled from publicly accessible PR and propaganda materials published by nine actors involved in four conflicts. These actors vary with regard to their degree of power, including two decision-makers (the presidents of Ukraine and the US), two challengers with access to formal political decision-making and their military wings (Kurdish actors in Syria and Republican actors in Northern Ireland), and two outsiders without access to formal decision-making (the Islamic State and the Red Army Faction). The two coders achieved satisfactory reliability scores (Krippendorff's Alpha: M = .89) and coded a sample of 387 texts. Here, they identified 5,691 legitimation statements on which the empirical analyses are based. The study is currently in an early stage of data analysis. Preliminary results show that most actors discuss ingroup and outgroup legitimacy to a similar extent. As expected, an overwhelming majority of statements evaluates the legitimacy of an actor's ingroup positively (99.2% of all statements about the ingroup) and their outgroup's legitimacy negatively (99.7% of all statements about the outgroup). When it comes to arguments relating to the first dimension of legitimacy, informal rules such as traditions (0.4%/0.5% of all positive/negative action-related statements) or following charismatic leaders (2.7%/0%) are rarely cited. More important are arguments based on the legality/illegality of actions (30.9%/63.8%), such as claims of acting in self-defence or accusations of terrorism. These findings are in line with previous research. More comprehensive results, also including the other dimensions of legitimacy, will be presented at the conference to fully deliver on the study's contributions: first, a comparative perspective on legitimacy as a central concept for understanding power relations, and second, an expanded application of legitimacy theory beyond state actors.

POL18 Climate, Energy, and Polarizing Political Issues

PP 0796 From average to anti-climate: Explaining radical right party position shifts through frame profiles

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Recent developments in many Western European democracies indicate that climate change has become an increasingly contested issue. One explanation is the adoption of anti-climate policy positions from radical right parties (RRP) coupled with their electoral success. RRP have shifted their position on climate change policy from an approximately average position to a clear anti-climate position in the last two decades (Dickson and Hobolt 2024). This striking example of a policy position shift is the focus of this study. Although there is a rich literature on when and why parties shift their policy positions, only scant evidence exists on *how* parties reposition. I explain the strategic communication when shifting position with the novel concept of *frame profiles*. Frame profiles of parties reflect the mix of frames parties use in their communication about an issue analogous to issue profiles (Wagner and Meyer 2014). I argue that RRP's climate change frame profiles did not only change considerably in the last 15 years but also became aligned with their immigration frame profiles. Thus, climate change is increasingly treated as a wedge issue by radical right parties. Extending the PARTYPRESS data set (Erfort et al. 2023) with party press releases from Switzerland and France, the empirical analysis is currently based on press releases from 10 radical right parties across 9 Western European countries (2010–2025). To measure RRP's frame profiles on climate change, I use a transfer learning approach and fine-tune a pre-trained transformer model to classify generic frames as well as an inductive LLM approach (Kubli 2025) to classify issue-specific frames. The results will have important implications for research on party communication strategies and shed light on the role of parties in tackling climate change. While climate change is a global problem, national-level actors, such as political parties, remain crucial in the fight against it.

POL18 Climate, Energy, and Polarizing Political Issues

PP 0797 What fuels the fire? Identifying polarizing content in climate crisis news coverage

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There is extensive research on the relationship between polarized political attitudes and potentially polarizing media content (e.g. Kubin & von Sikorski 2021; Kreiss & McGregor 2023). Media effects on polarization are often discussed in the context of counter-attitudinal or incivil media content (e.g. Bail et al. 2018; Druckman et al. 2019), yet surprisingly little is known about which specific textual features make media content polarizing. This study addresses that gap by developing, implementing, and validating a theory-driven, multi-layered computational framework for detecting symptoms of polarization in news content.

While not all forms of polarization pose a threat to democracy, we focus on a form that has been theorized as inherently harmful: destructive polarization (Esau et al. 2025) denotes communicative practices that undermine the functioning of the democratic public sphere and marks the point at which communication dynamics erode citizens' ability to understand one another and participate meaningfully in collective decision-making. Esau et al. identify five symptoms that signal such dynamics: breakdown of communication, discrediting and dismissing of information, erasure of complexities, disproportionate attention to extreme voices, and exclusion through emotions.

Our paper operationalizes these symptoms in news texts by integrating conceptual refinement with state-of-the-art computational content analysis, including the use of Large Language Models. As a pilot domain, we focus on climate crisis news coverage, an issue that is both socially consequential and empirically linked to polarized public reactions.

We propose a modular operationalisation strategy that translates each symptom into measurable textual indicators. To capture, for example, the symptom of breakdown of communication - understood as opposing sides failing to engage or engaging only in hostile ways - we measure patterns of speaker attribution, (in)direct speech, stance diversity, and toxicity levels. Discrediting and dismissing of information is identified through a pipeline combining named-entity recognition, claim extraction, and detection of delegitimising cues. Exclusion through emotions is captured via targeted emotion detection, derogatory-term identification, and out-group-directed toxicity. All modules feed into an integrated indicator architecture in which symptoms of destructive polarization are quantified as continuous, non-binary dimensions and systematically tested across German and English news corpora. Because single articles often provide too little information to exhibit multiple symptoms, our framework supports aggregated analyses (e.g., by outlet, topic, or time period).

Before ECREA, we will not only complete and validate the automatic measurement of these indicators but also test whether exposure to indicators of destructive polarization has a measurable association with polarized attitudes. We do so using a large-scale German panel dataset combining passive web-tracking and survey data (N ≈ 2,600; 2022–2023). By matching exposure to articles containing symptom indicators to respondents' climate-related attitudes, we assess whether correlations between indicator exposure and polarization emerge in vivo. Symptom indicators that reliably predict shifts in polarized attitudes will be designated empirically consequential and applied to larger news corpora.

By presenting an empirically validated operationalisation of destructive polarization in text, our study advances methodological standards, offers a scalable toolkit for diagnosing destructive dynamics in public discourse and lays the groundwork for future comparative and longitudinal analyses.

POL18 Climate, Energy, and Polarizing Political Issues

PP 0798 Preempting, facilitating, and coping with polarization: Democratic resilience in contested energy transitions

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Across Europe, accelerated energy transitions are unfolding in the context of multiple, overlapping crises, including climate change, geopolitical reordering, economic stagnation. Manifesting global issues at the local level, sustainable energy projects combine high political urgency with localized decision-making, asymmetries of power, and material interventions into everyday environments [1,2], making them a revealing context for studying *polarization* as a communicative process that actively (re)shapes citizen participation in local energy transition [3,4]. Building on Esau et al., I understand polarization as a *dynamic* produced through communicative practices that are not problematic per se but can become democratically dysfunctional (or "destructive") when they erode reciprocity, amplify antagonism, and undermine trust in democratic procedures [5].

Existing research on energy transition conflicts in Germany focuses mostly on procedural participation or media framing, often framed through acceptance vs. opposition [4,6]. In contrast, this paper conceptualizes contested energy transitions as ongoing democratic problems in which conflict is legitimate, but communicative conditions fragile [4,7]. Accordingly, this paper asks: **How is polarization anticipated and managed in contested energy transitions?**

Empirically, the study draws on an ongoing multi-sited ethnography of wind power rollout processes in the German federal state of Baden-Württemberg. I follow planning and contestation across multiple municipalities through participant observation at public meetings, stakeholder interviews, field visits to designated sites, and analysis of local media coverage.

Preliminary finds show that institutional actors deploy preemptive communication formats to establish legitimacy and avoid escalation, often explicitly seeking to prevent local referenda that are widely perceived as polarizing rupture points [7]. Second, civil society organizations both facilitate and cope with polarization. While mobilization through a certain level of polarization is intrinsic to all organisations' role, right-wing leaning NGOs strategically favor referenda (Bürgerbegehren) as emotionally charged, majoritarian events that profit from populist rhetoric [4], while nature protection organizations engage in narrative buffering, counter-framing, and emotional regulation to sustain participation under strain [10]. Third, citizens develop everyday coping strategies within families and neighborhoods, including selective reframing, early de-escalation, and strategic disengagement [11]. Across all actor groups, lateral learning plays a key role, as actors compare their situations to nearby communities where conflicts have escalated and adjust communicative strategies accordingly [9,12].

The paper advances the concept of **anticipatory democratic resilience**, understood as practices aimed at maintaining participatory conditions before destructive polarization consolidates [5,8,9]. Implications for democratic resilience as a communicative process are discussed.

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POL18 Climate, Energy, and Polarizing Political Issues

PP 0799 AI-generated versus journalist-produced news. Exploring the role of news source and content accuracy in climate change communication

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Communicating about climate change and its consequences is very challenging. In contemporary digital environments, where journalistic reporting increasingly coexists with AI-generated information, concerns about credibility, misinformation, and public trust have intensified. In such a context, the present study examines how the source (AI-generated vs. journalist-generated) and accuracy (evidence-based vs. misleading) of climate change news shape citizens' attitudes and behavioral intentions across three Eastern European countries: Romania, Bulgaria, and the Republic of Moldova. By adopting a comparative perspective, the study addresses an important gap in climate communication research, particularly in contexts marked by different, but comparable levels of media trust, political polarization, and exposure to emerging digital technologies.

By means of a 2×2 between-subjects survey experiment, participants will be randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions in which they are exposed to short, news-style articles on climate-related topics, or to a control group. The stimuli consist of news articles that are systematically manipulated in terms of the source of the message (AI-generated vs. journalist-produced) and content accuracy (evidence-based vs. ambiguous or misleading data), while being standardized in tone, length, and complexity and localized for each national context.

Data collection is scheduled for early 2026. Building on previous research that has produced surprising and sometimes contradictory findings regarding the credibility of AI-generated versus human-produced news (e.g., Altay & Giraldi, 2024; Baptista et al., 2025), this study seeks to explore whether journalist-generated, evidence-based content is indeed associated with higher levels of perceived credibility, trust, and support for climate-related policies. Importantly, existing evidence suggests that AI-generated news can, in certain contexts, be perceived as equally credible, or even more credible, than journalist-produced content, particularly when accuracy cues are ambiguous or source cues are weak. Thus, we examine whether misleading information, especially when attributed to AI-generated sources, undermines credibility, increases uncertainty, and reduces attitudinal support and behavioral intentions, or whether such effects vary depending on individual predispositions and contextual factors.

Furthermore, the study explores how individual cognitive dispositions, such as confirmation bias and ambiguity aversion, shape the processing of climate-related messages across different informational conditions. Rather than assuming uniform effects, the analysis explores whether these dispositions are associated with different responses to AI-generated versus journalist-generated content. At the contextual level, we examine potential cross-national differences in message effects across Romania, Bulgaria, and the Republic of Moldova.

Results from this study will contribute to ongoing debates on AI, misinformation, and climate communication, offering insights relevant for scholars, journalists, and policymakers interested in the study of democratic resilience and digital regulation in the climate domain.

**Funding for this study is provided by the BROD project under the Digital Europe Programme of the European Union, contract number 101226153.*

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POL19 Political Communication in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

PP 0786 Punished for expressing online disagreement with political leadership? Civic participation and deliberation on social media during the Covid-19 pandemic in Russia

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This study examines the patterns of (dis)agreement between Russian citizens and state authorities concerning policy measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. It also aims to understand what communicative tools Russian leadership employed in online spaces to soften social tensions or eliminate public dissent expressed digitally.

To construct the theoretical framework, the research draws upon several relevant concepts, including theories of democratic, authoritarian, and cumulative deliberation, as well as Habermas's notion of the public sphere and the theory of the authoritarian public. These frameworks help explain how digital communication in non-democratic contexts can simultaneously simulate inclusiveness and enforce control. Compiling these approaches allows for avoiding unnecessarily dichotomic visions on data by removing the opposition between democratic and authoritarian deliberation, as well as avoiding the pre-determination of empirical results that emerges by characterizing deliberation in Russia as authoritarian a priori.

Methodologically, the study employs content analysis of online conversations between citizens and government structures. It examines key dimensions of political communication such as participation activity, inclusiveness, and the dynamics of (dis)agreement between state officials and citizens. Empirical data were collected from the official social media accounts (VK.com) of three major government structures: (1) the Russian Government's portal *Stopcoronavirus.RF*, (2) *Rospotrebnadzor* — the federal agency responsible for public health supervision, and (3) the Russian representative office of the World Health Organization. The dataset includes a total of 29,294 comments posted between March 2020 and February 2023. All comments were parsed, manually coded, and analyzed.

The study found that, across the crisis period, the overall level of agreement among citizens and with authorities remained higher than the level of disagreement. The most frequent category of disagreement observed in online discussions was citizen–citizen disagreement, whereas citizen–authority disagreement was the least frequent category.

The research identified two principal mechanisms used by Russian authorities to manage or eliminate citizens' disagreement in online environments. First, a deliberative mode of communication marked by polite, reasoned, and respectful responses from official accounts appeared to soften dissent and sustain legitimacy. Second, a non-deliberative mode including denial of access to commenting, deletion or moderation of comments, and blocking of users for violating community rules functioned as an instrument of discursive control.

The findings reveal that the deliberative approach was used selectively by Russian authorities, primarily, to eliminate disagreement among citizens regarding policy measures or to maintain consensus among those already supportive of policy. This hybrid strategy combined deliberative discourse, aimed at legitimising policy and managing public disagreement, with restrictive measures limiting digital participation. As a result, these practices undermined the deliberative quality of online communication in terms of inclusiveness, openness, equality of civic participation.

The results highlight how state-led online communication during crises such as Covid-19 can simultaneously perform democratic legitimacy and reinforce authoritarian resilience by shaping, managing, and, when necessary, silencing public discourse.

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POL19 Political Communication in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

PP 0787 Disabling controversy: The discursive mechanics of propaganda talking points

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Contemporary political discourse is quick to attack. Not only do proponents of societally controversial views (e.g., on migration, vaccination) complain about alleged cancel cultures and narrowed opinion corridors; also those invested in differentiated analysis and critical inquiry (e.g., in relation to the Middle East conflict) regularly encounter hostile responses to claims that should normally be well within the range of legitimate controversy. In this contribution, I argue that part of the aggressiveness in political discourse can be understood as an outcome of deliberately crafted propaganda narratives aimed at transforming deliberative controversy into identity conflict.

To do so, I draw upon a qualitative analysis of public social media interactions (X, Youtube) around four highly controversial issues: migration, Covid-19 vaccination, Russia's invasion in Ukraine, and the war between Hamas and Israel. Through a systematic comparative analysis, I isolate a recurring pattern of specific claims being constructed and responded-to as propaganda talking points. By means of publicly identifying certain ideas with a much wider, politically positioned narrative, propaganda invites readers to interpret the expression of these ideas not as literal statements, but as markers of much wider ideological identities. I show that this symbolic transformation of expressed ideas is systematically built-up by key propaganda actors and can be applied to a wide range of beliefs, which may be expressly subjective (e.g., feeling foreign in one's country), normative (e.g., Israel's right to self-defense), fact-based (e.g., vaccine side effects) or misleading (e.g., NATO's broken promise): Once an idea is recognized as a propaganda talking point, ensuing interactions reliably shift from debating presented claims themselves toward the conflictive performance of ideological positionings within a polarized political space, attacking (or endorsing) alters for views well in excess of what was manifestly expressed.

Discussing my findings in the context of current work on political polarization, I argue that the construction of propaganda talking points not only disables the constructive negotiation of controversial ideas; it also nurtures in speakers the experience of being unduly attacked, if not ostracized for expressing (prima facie, subjectively or objectively) legitimate positions. Bringing in recent theorizing on participatory propaganda, I further argue that the elicitation of identity-based hostility plays an important role for policing ingroup cohesion while delegitimizing outgroups as aggressive, deceitful, and disinterested in legitimate controversy, fueling polarized intergroup conflict. Finally, I draw upon a few rare examples of constructive controversy to discuss avenues for disarming weaponized talking points and re-enabling inclusive public discourse.

POL19 Political Communication in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

PP 0788 Comparing Digital Activist Publics in Authoritarian Regimes

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This paper examines digital resistance under authoritarian regimes through a comparative analysis of digital activism in China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Syria. While digital media have become central to contemporary political contention, existing scholarship has largely been shaped by a binary debate over whether digital technologies empower activists or reinforce authoritarian control (Pospieszna & Galus, 2019; Rød & Weidmann, 2015). This debate has most often been explored through highly visible protest moments, such as uprisings or large-scale demonstrations, which has resulted in an event-centered understanding of digital activism. Consequently, more subtle, continuous, and preparatory forms of digital resistance have remained underexplored.

To address these limitations, the paper suggests a comparative framework grounded in the concept of activist publics (Asen, 2000; Toepfl, 2020). Activist publics are conceptualized as dynamic configurations emerging from the interplay of three core elements: communicative environments, participants, and discursive practices. This framework enables a shift away from singular protest events toward a broader analytical lens capable of capturing the diversity of digital resistance across authoritarian contexts, including forms of engagement that do not necessarily aim at regime change or align with liberal-democratic ideals.

Methodologically, the paper draws on exploratory case studies using an embedded multiple-case design (Yin, 2014). The five cases were selected to reflect variation in regime type, cultural background, technological development, and levels of authoritarian control. Data collection combines academic research, document analysis of policy reports, media coverage, and NGO publications with expert interviews conducted with scholars and activists specializing in digital activism.

The analysis demonstrates how political, technological, and sociocultural conditions shape the environments of digital activism. Authoritarian regimes exhibit significant learning effects, continuously refining their repressive toolkits by combining digital surveillance, censorship, legal measures, and strategic narratives. These environments, in turn, shape activists' strategies, including the use of encrypted platforms and alternative communication spaces, as well as hybrid online–offline forms of engagement.

Across cases, activist participants and goals vary widely. Digital resistance ranges from policy-oriented critique and issue-based mobilization to explicit demands for regime change, alongside forms of participation that actors themselves may not label as political. Subtle resistance plays a crucial role in highly restrictive environments, where overt opposition is risky. Discursive practices such as humor, memes, and literary discussion function as vehicles for political expression while avoiding direct confrontation. Gender- and ecology-focused activism emerges across cases as a particularly salient and comparatively accessible form of mobilization.

The paper highlights the importance of diaspora and exile communities, which often articulate more critical and confrontational discourses under less restrictive conditions, thereby shaping transnational activist publics. In conclusion, the proposed two-dimensional analytical model offers a nuanced lens for understanding the diversity, dynamics, and evolution of activist publics under authoritarian rule, contributing to a more differentiated understanding of digital activism.

POL19 Political Communication in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

PP 0789 Platformisation and digitalisation in electoral autocracies and democracies

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In modern electoral autocracies, independent media are rarely subject to official censorship or outright bans. Instead, they are constrained by economic strangulation (Dragomir, 2018), specifically the state capture of advertising markets and the weaponisation of regulatory frameworks. Often, the ruling party deprives independent media of crucial revenue to retain financial independence, for example, by directing state funds to loyalists (Bátorfy and Urbán, 2020) or by intimidating private advertisers into boycotting independent outlets.

Deprived of traditional revenue streams, independent media are forced to migrate online to survive and reach audiences. Nevertheless, even online, they remain constrained by more elusive supranational forces: algorithms, platformisation, Denial-of-Service-Attacks, and bot armies, to name a few. In this paper, we explore the twofold pressure the media in autocracies face: being forced to migrate online for political and economic reasons, while facing the combined pressure of the state and the opaque logic of global digital platforms (Cornia, Sehl, and Nielsen, 2020; Poell, Nieborg, and Van Dijck, 2019).

Drawing on 22 semi-structured interviews with media professionals in Hungary, Poland, and Serbia, this study investigates the intersection of state capture and platformisation. The findings suggest that digitalisation, rather than serving as a liberation technology, often exacerbates the precarity of independent journalism in backsliding democracies. Participants across all three countries reported a double bind: deprived of traditional revenue by the state, they are forced to compete for attention in a digital ecosystem dominated by algorithms that incentivise sensationalism, polarisation, and 'clickbait' over public interest reporting.

Hungary, Poland, and Serbia are among the world's most dramatic cases of democratic backsliding (Lührmann et al., 2020), but the comparative analysis highlights the varying stages of this trajectory. In Poland, which is still considered a flawed democracy, professionals view algorithmic pressure and the financial squeeze from Big Tech as vulnerabilities that create fertile ground for media capture. In Hungary, where independent print media has been effectively eradicated, outlets are confined to the digital sphere, where cybersecurity concerns are increasing. Serbia represents the 'worst-case scenario,' where digital harassment frequently escalates into physical violence.

Ultimately, this paper argues that the combined effects of digitalisation and platformisation facilitate autocratisation. By displacing independent media from the market and subjecting them to algorithmic volatility, regimes can erode the economic viability of the fourth estate without formally dismantling it.

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POL19 Political Communication in Authoritarian and Hybrid Regimes

PP 0790 Victimization as a political strategy: The case of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte and the International Criminal Court (ICC)

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On March 11, 2025, former Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was arrested in Manila through an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) Pre-Trial Chamber. Duterte was charged with crimes against humanity, including murder, torture, and rape, allegedly committed between November 1, 2011 and March 16, 2019 during his "war on drugs" that resulted in the deaths of 6,000 to 30,000 mostly poor Filipinos. He was flown to the Netherlands the next day, where he is currently detained at the ICC's facilities.

Duterte is a polarizing figure in Philippine politics. His rise to presidency is preceded by 22 years as mayor of Davao City, where he first cultivated his strongman image and was central to his political identity. Duterte consistently projected himself as a no-nonsense leader, disdainful of elites and formalities, defiant of international and social norms, and, more importantly, with a reputation for harsh crime control. His seeming fearlessness and authenticity earned him a landslide victory in the 2016 elections and great popularity among Filipinos, while critics warned of his normalization of violence and authoritarian

tendencies. Nevertheless, this Duterte "brand" was strategically wielded to mobilize public support, not just for him, but for his family and political allies, who themselves held powerful posts in government and the private sector.

Duterte's arrest and subsequent detention triggered a wave of politically charged disinformation. Among the dominant communicative strategies currently peddled online by his family and allies is the "victim narrative" which positions Duterte and his family as wronged, mistreated, and persecuted by political enemies.

This ongoing research seeks to inquire into the nature of the victimhood claims made by Duterte's family and his allies in their online political communications, and to identify the ecosystem of actors, networks, and disinformation infrastructures that spread this message. The study is anchored in Hronesova and Kreiss's (2024) concept of "hijacked victimhood"—a strategic and manipulative approach that leverages victimhood narratives during power contests—and the Filipino concept of awa (pity) leveraged to amplify emotional storytelling. Through a computational analysis of Facebook posts by the Duterte family and their political allies, we examined how Duterte's arrest was discursively constructed using victimhood narratives. Initial analysis reveals two strands of victimhood: expressive and instrumental. Expressive victimhood positions Duterte as an elderly statesman with a deteriorating health condition and a subject of emotional trauma and unjust arrest, while instrumental victimhood recasts him as a martyr and a target of political adversaries within the Philippine government and international human rights bodies. This latter strand is strategically utilized to secure political gain by shifting the focus away from the victims of the Philippine drug war. Ultimately, these findings contribute to the emotional and affective turn in media research by demonstrating how "affect" is weaponized to bypass rational political discourse. Furthermore, this study offers a critical examination of these emerging political communication strategies as a key component of the authoritarian playbook, illustrating how modern regimes exploit digital infrastructures to maintain domestic legitimacy even while under international legal scrutiny.

POL20 Incivility, Sexism, and Hostility in Online Political Talk

PP 0904 Sexism as a normative cue: How target and gender shape reactions to sexist comments in online political discussions

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Women participate less visibly in politics online. At the same time, incivility and hate speech are disproportionately targeting women with a public profile (e.g., politicians or journalists) and female social media users. The gender gap in participation is often attributed to women's self-censorship to avoid such backlash. We take a social norms perspective to connect these observations. The sexist online commenting culture creates communicative norms that alienate and frighten women and differentially decrease their participation. Such norms are particularly obtrusive if they are signaled to a socially close person.

Specifically, we predicted the following: Exposure to sexist comments increases the perceived injunctive norm that women are not welcome (H1a) and the expected sanctions for participating (H2a), decreases participation measured by the intent to like and comment, and increases participation measured by the intent to report a comment (H3a). These effects are stronger for women than for men (H1–3b). For women, these effects are stronger when sexism targets a socially close female social media user (H1–3c). The reinforcement by a socially close target is stronger for women compared to men (H1–3d).

We test the hypotheses using a preregistered experiment (https://osf.io/c5reb/overview?view_only=a5d51287f0d64c0e9fed20a033d5dcde). We created eight social media posts by a news organization featuring a female politician, followed by a comment from a female social media user. The subsequent three comments were either sexist or not (factor: sexsim) and addressed either the politician or the user (factor: target). Sexist comments and target recognition were pretested in a pilot study. In a within-subject design, each participant is exposed to each news post and each comment set once and to each sexism by target combination twice. 630 participants (50% women) are currently recruited via Prolific. We estimate mixed-effect models with preregistered contrasts assigned to each hypothesis.

Preliminary analyses of 475 participants indicate that sexist attacks increased the perception of a discussion unwelcoming to women and the fear of being harassed when engaging in the discussion (supporting H1a and H2a). They also reduced the intent to like and comment on the news post, and increased the intent to report the comments (supporting H3a). These effects were stronger for women regarding the expected sanctions (supporting H2b) and the likelihood of commenting (partially supporting H3b), but not for the other outcomes (not supporting H1b and parts of H3b). There was no evidence for gender-specific reinforcement when the target was a socially close female social media user (not supporting H1–3c and d).

These results suggest that sexist attacks against female actors in political online discussions set communicative norms, marking these spaces as hostile. They decrease participation intentions for both men and women, but particularly frighten women and deter them from participating. Against our predictions, the target made no (gender-specific) difference. The results raise questions about whether norm violations should be considered differently depending on whether their target

is a public or private person. From the perspective of deteriorating effects on (female) participation, both seem similarly consequential. This has important implications for academic debates about incivility and its effects, as well as for applied interventions.

POL20 Incivility, Sexism, and Hostility in Online Political Talk

PP 0905 Anti-racist communication on social media

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Anti-racist communication on social media has become a prominent and rapidly growing research topic. Events such as #BlackLivesMatter demonstrate how social media can foster transnational solidarity, amplify calls for justice, and stimulate widespread public debate about racial inequality (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Freelon et al., 2018; Jackson et al., 2020). However, the interdisciplinary nature of research on anti-racist communication has resulted in varied definitions, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches. A comprehensive systematization is lacking.

This scoping review on anti-racist communication on social media addresses this research gap. First, we provide a comprehensive overview of diverse research fields and perspectives, and how they intersect. Second, we examine existing definitions of anti-racist communication to clarify conceptual distinctions and similarities for more unified conceptualizations. Third, we map theoretical frameworks. Fourth, we examine how scholarship addresses communicators, forms and content of anti-racist messaging (e.g., text, videos, allyship messaging), social media platforms (e.g., TikTok), and outcomes.

Our scoping review follows recommended methodological steps (e.g., Munn et al., 2018) and adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (Tricco et al., 2018). Our review is preregistered in the Open Science Framework (OSF). In brief, we included English-language, published empirical or theoretical studies that explicitly engage with anti-racist communication on social media, and excluded offline-only studies, non-English or unpublished sources, grey literature, and literature reviews. We identified 3,100 potentially relevant articles from journals in communication science, information science, political science, psychology, and sociology via the databases SCOPUS and EBSCO. After excluding duplicated (n = 500), one researcher of our team reviewed the titles and abstracts of the remaining 2,600 articles and re-checked our criteria. This is a standard step in scoping reviews, as automated article extraction inevitably retrieves articles that do not fully meet the criteria (e.g., due to synonyms). Ambiguous cases were discussed within the team. Four coders independently coded the remaining 345 articles using a deductive-inductive coding scheme. To enhance coding quality, all articles were coded by two individuals, and disagreements were discussed within the team.

Findings reveal heterogeneity in how anti-racist communication is defined, multiple research perspectives (e.g., digital activism), and varied theoretical lenses (e.g., critical race theory). Overall, however, it is notable that the theoretical foundation is often quite narrow, and theories and models are frequently not utilized for argumentation. Furthermore, it becomes apparent that anti-racist communication is often only one among several components—studies frequently do not primarily investigate communication against racism, but also against ableism or sexism. Research components span diverse communicators such as activists, celebrities, and ordinary citizens; message forms such as text, videos, and music, social media platforms such as X and Instagram, as well as audiences such as perpetrators, bystanders, and marginalized communities. Outcomes span affective, cognitive, and behavioral domains. This work offers a preliminary conceptual and cross-platform map of anti-racist communication and describes how the second coding round will deepen the thematic synthesis to advance an integrated framework.

POL20 Incivility, Sexism, and Hostility in Online Political Talk

PP 0906 And there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it: News media, partisan prejudice, and the justification of political violence

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In recent years, several democracies, including the United States, have witnessed a troubling rise in political violence. Notable recent examples include Melissa Hortman, Democratic Speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives, who was assassinated in June 2025, and Charlie Kirk, a prominent conservative activist and staunch supporter of the Republican Party, who was murdered in July 2025. In response to these attacks, former U.S. President Barack Obama described the events as “horrific and a tragedy” and emphasized that “there are no ifs, ands, or buts about it (…) and we have to be clear and forthright in condemning it.” Such incidents underscore a fundamental truth: political violence has no place in a democracy.

While the vast majority of citizens reject such acts, a persistent minority regards political violence as justified under certain conditions, thereby posing a serious threat to democracy. The present study examined how news media coverage may contribute to these harmful beliefs. Building on scholarship on media stereotyping and prejudice, the study focuses on

processes such as outgroup derogation, victim blaming, and dehumanization that may be triggered by specific news narratives about political violence.

I propose that specific narrative cues in news reporting can trigger partisan prejudice, shaping audience perceptions of political violence when the target belongs to the opposing political camp. In particular, cues related to how victims of political violence are described are expected to influence beliefs about such acts. For example, when coverage portrays the victim in ways that invite blame ("victim-to-villain") or dehumanization ("heartless," "not worth mourning"), partisan prejudice may be triggered, reducing empathy and facilitating moral disengagement. As a result, citizens may become more willing to justify violence. Drawing on a historical example outlined in the talk, I refer to this phenomenon as the *lanternization effect*. The lanternization effect is defined as the impact of news media on the justification of political violence through reduced empathy for the victim and heightened moral disengagement.

The theoretical expectations were tested in a large-scale experiment (N = 3,055). Republican (Democratic) participants were randomly assigned to read a news article describing an act of political violence against a Democratic (Republican) politician. The articles systematically varied in the presence and intensity of prejudice-eliciting cues. Results revealed a dose-dependent effect: exposure to such cues tended to increase the justification of political violence. This effect was fully mediated by decreased empathy toward the victim and increased moral disengagement. Notably, a news coverage that promoted a victim-to-villain transformation or dehumanizing portrayals produced particularly strong effects. Of note, bipartisan rejection of political violence was insufficient to reduce harmful effects.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that news reporting on political violence—even when ostensibly objective and factual—can meaningfully shape moral judgments and emotional distance. By activating partisan prejudice, certain forms of coverage may decouple internal moral standards from evaluations of political violence, allowing audiences to accept unethical violent behavior without psychological distress. The talk concludes by discussing implications for journalistic practice and outlining strategies to mitigate this unintended yet consequential lanternization effect.

POL21 Wartime Communication and Strategic Narratives

PP 0894 Filtered politics: Ideological transformation of far-right content in transnational platform circulation

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In 2024, Alice Weidel, co-leader of Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland, became a trending figure on Chinese social media. Her political speeches circulated as aesthetically edited videos with Chinese subtitles, often reframing her positions within nationalist discourses. This transnational circulation raises questions about how extremist political communication transforms across cultural-linguistic boundaries: rather than ideological diffusion, content may be systematically recontextualized through local political frameworks.

This study examines how platform affordances and audience practices shape the transformation of far-right political content. We integrate three theoretical dimensions: visual politics and gendered populist performance (Moffitt, 2022), platform affordances theory (Bucher & Helmond, 2018), and digital nationalism scholarship (Zhang, 2020). We propose that Chinese audiences actively appropriate Western political figures to serve local political imaginaries, constituting nationalist instrumentalization rather than passive reception.

Employing a computational social science approach, we analyze Weidel-related content across Chinese platforms (Xiaohongshu, Bilibili, Douyin) during the 2024–2025 German electoral cycle. The research design combines sentiment analysis with quasi-experimental methods (interrupted time series, difference-in-differences), exploiting key political events—including Weidel's nomination, Musk's endorsement, and the federal election—as intervention points. Pilot content analysis (n = 200) reveals that aesthetic and appearance-focused framing predominates (31.5%), followed by leadership imagery (26.0%) and nationalist discourse (22.5%), while substantive policy discussion remains marginal (11.0%). These preliminary patterns suggest systematic privileging of visual and nationalist frames over original ideological content.

This research contributes to political communication scholarship by examining how entertainment-oriented platform architectures create conditions for political content to be recontextualized in ways serving local discursive purposes. The study advances understanding of transnational far-right circulation by documenting mechanisms of ideological transformation: far-right figures may achieve transnational visibility while their original positions become subordinated to aesthetic presentation and nationalist appropriation.

Keywords

platform affordances, far-right populism, digital nationalism, transnational political communication, visual politics

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POL21 Wartime Communication and Strategic Narratives

PP 0895 The rhetoric behind rape in war: The case of Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974

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The human body occupies a central role in international relations, as it is both shaped by and shapes violence. Specifically, when the body experiences an injury or loss, its balance is disrupted, and it attempts to restore the imbalance by either repairing the previous balance or creating a new one (Morgenthau, 1948). In this context, rape is literally a "weapon of war" that targets the body, gender, religious identity, and psychic well-being of victims and communities identified as hostile (Diken & Laustsen, 2005).

This study examines the discursive dimension of rape as manifested in the rhetoric of actors in situations of armed conflict. Specifically, the rhetorical analysis draws on the theory of moral exclusion, which explains the dichotomy between "good" and "evil," the display of hostility, and extreme harmful behavior toward the group perceived as the enemy.

The case of Turkey's invasion of Cyprus in 1974 is used for empirical analysis. The research is guided by the following research questions: (1) What meaning is attributed to human bodies, and what is their role in the construction of violence? (2) How does rape function as a communicative practice within war? (3) How is moral exclusion expressed through the rhetoric of politicians and individuals, through which bodies are separated and defined as either worthy of protection or as legitimate targets of violent practices?

Qualitative content analysis is conducted on a corpus of texts to address the research questions. The corpus consists of the discourse of political figures and other actors, drawn from testimonies and newspaper publications.

The expected contribution of this research is to shed light on the role of rape as a political and communicative act between ethnic groups or states. It further examines the rhetorical construction of violence through which bodies are produced, and how certain bodies are deemed worthy of violence within ethnic or interstate conflicts.

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POL21 Wartime Communication and Strategic Narratives

PP 0896 Discourse analysis in wartime communication: Limits and adaptations in studying energy and sanctions narratives

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Contemporary political communication research increasingly relies on discourse analysis to study power, legitimacy, and meaning-making. However, most classical approaches to discourse analysis were developed for relatively stable public spheres. Full-scale war, platform-mediated communication, and hybrid influence operations fundamentally challenge these assumptions and raise questions about the adequacy of existing methodological tools.

This paper critically examines the limits of classical discourse analysis in the context of wartime communication, focusing on energy and sanctions narratives related to Russia's war against Ukraine. Energy debates and sanctions discourses represent a particularly revealing empirical field, as they combine security concerns, economic arguments, moral framing, and strategic ambiguity. Across European media and political communication, these narratives often oscillate between depoliticization ("market logic," "prices," "energy security") and moralization ("sacrifice," "solidarity," "burden on citizens"), producing competing interpretations of responsibility and legitimacy.

Building on a qualitative analysis of political statements, media commentaries, and expert discourses in selected European countries, the paper demonstrates how traditional text-centered discourse analysis struggles to capture three key dynamics of wartime communication: the fragmentation of discursive authority across platforms, the strategic normalization of violence and economic harm, and the blurring of boundaries between political communication, expertise, and influence operations. The study shows that meaning is increasingly produced not within isolated texts, but across interconnected discursive ecosystems involving media outlets, political actors, experts, and digital platforms.

Methodologically, the paper proposes a set of adaptations to discourse analysis that account for these transformations. These include shifting the unit of analysis from individual texts to discursive constellations, integrating platform-sensitive

approaches, and explicitly addressing the temporal compression and moral asymmetry characteristic of wartime communication.

The paper contributes to communication studies by offering an applied methodological reflection grounded in empirical material rather than abstract theory. It argues that rethinking discourse analysis is essential for studying power, normalization, and responsibility in contemporary conflicts. By situating the discussion within energy and sanctions debates, the study also demonstrates how methodological innovation can enhance our understanding of political communication under conditions of war and systemic crisis.

POL21 Wartime Communication and Strategic Narratives

PP 0897 From Battlefield to Newsroom: Narrative warfare in Zelenskyy's discourses mirrored in the Romanian media

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In times of war, political speeches function as instruments of persuasion , myth-making, and strategic communication (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1997; Wodak, 2009). In the same time, media, through framing, selects certain aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a text, thereby promoting a particular problem definition, interpretations, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation (Entman, 1993). This study explores how Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy constructed his wartime addresses during the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion (February 24, 2022–February 24, 2023), and how those narratives (Propp, 1928; Booker, 2004; Vonnegut, 2008) were mediatized by Romanian mainstream media, confering the journlism a mythical role (Lule, 2001). As Ukraine fought for its sovereignty on the ground, Zelenskyy waged a parallel battle through speeches that rallied domestic and international support, stir public sentiment, and framed Ukraine's role as a moral and democratic bastion. But did this rhetorical strategy cross national borders? And if so, how did Romanian media incorporate or reshape these narratives? This study explores the role of rhetoric not only to narrate war but to shape its meaning across borders, responding to the question: *How did the main narratives and frames (such as problem definitions and moral evaluations) in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's discourse align with the logic of Romanian mainstream news media?*

The current research combines critical discourse analysis with computational linguistics in a mixed-method approach, drawing on an original corpus of *n* = 580 presidential speeches and *n* = 17.080 news articles from Romania's three most trusted news media websites: *ProTV*, *Digi24*, and *HotNews*. text-mining softwares (*KH Coder* and *Sketch Engine*) were employed to analyze Zelenskyy's speeches thematic patterns, emotional language shifts, frequency distributions, rhetorical structures, and dominant frames across the chronology of key military turning points. Central to the analysis was the identification of mythological constructions and archetypes in Zelenskyy's discourse (*Myth of Sacred Land, Myth of Eternal Return*, *The Hero*, *The Victim*, *The Evil Other*, etc). These myths were followed over time to see how they matched events on the battlefield and later appeared in Romanian news reports.

Preliminary findings reveal that Zelenskyy's communication evolved in three phases. In the early months of the invasion, his speeches were longer, emotionally charged, and myth-laden, presenting Ukraine as a heroic underdog and moral force. As the war progressed, his messages became more strategic and focused, using precise language and symbolic references tailored to global audiences. Notably, the emergence and decline of specific myths coincided with important moments such as the siege of Mariupol, the recapture of Kherson, or international summits. During certain phases, particularly the start of the war and its one-year mark, Zelenskyy's dominant narrative frames were adopted by Romanian outlets.

POL21 Wartime Communication and Strategic Narratives

PP 0898 The influence of Russian state-controlled narratives on alternative Italian news outlets: An LLM-assisted frame analysis

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On 24th February 2022, Russia started a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In an attempt to justify the invasion, Russian media engaged in an information war, making use of false information and a well-thought-out language to describe events. Preferred targets of pro-Kremlin narratives are alternative media worldwide, with Italian ones being no exception. The 2022-elected Italian government features several actors with clearly documented pro-Russian views. Despite being a markedly Western country, Italy saw its citizens' support for Ukraine rapidly deteriorating, and pro-Russian communication on the invasion of Ukraine by Italian political actors may have contributed to this development.

Against this backdrop, this work presents an analysis of the war-related content of two alternative media closely linked to Italian anti-system parties. This study aims to investigate elements of the Russian full-scale invasion framing that have spilt into Italian alternative media sources. We analyzed news articles linked to the invasion of Ukraine from two Russian state-controlled news outlets, Russia Today (RT) and Vesti.ru, two Italian anti-system news outlets, ByoBlu and Il Paragone, and one Italian mainstream news outlet La Repubblica.

This study employed frame and narrative analysis to examine the content in the Russian and Italian coverage of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, using an inductive-deductive approach combining manual coding with LLM-assisted analysis to identify recurring frames and narratives. In an initial exploratory phase, around 200 articles from both Italian and Russian sources were read to inductively identify recurring narratives and group them in broader organizing frames. These findings informed the creation of the codebook used for the systematic coding. The inductive coding phase yielded 34 narratives grouped into 8 overarching frames.

For a preliminary, strategically selected sample of 100 news articles, drawn from the entire body of articles (5424), performed both manual and LLM-assisted coding using the ChatGPT-5 API to identify any narratives contained in the articles.

Our preliminary results suggest that, on average, Italian alternative media news articles are more similar to Russian state-controlled news articles than Italian mainstream news articles are. We find that alternative sources were on average closer to Russian media articles compared to the Italian mainstream news media articles. Moreover, on average, GPT-5 correctly identified 78.6% of the manually coded narratives in the Italian articles and 73.6% in the Russian articles. Lastly, our findings showed partial alignment between Italian alternative media and Russian sources: in 30% of the analysed articles, more than half of the narratives overlapped.

POL22 Strategic Communication, Diplomacy, and Institutional Voice

PP 1009 Reading power in stone: Architectural communication and democratic self-representation in the United States and Denmark

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This paper examines how democratic values, power relations, and political self-understandings are materially communicated through architecture. While democratic theory often treats built space as a neutral backdrop for political action, this article argues that architecture is itself a medium of political communication: it shapes how power becomes visible, how citizens encounter institutions, and how democratic legitimacy is spatially produced. By comparing two contrasting democratic trajectories—the revolutionary founding of the United States and the negotiated, evolutionary transition to democracy in Denmark—the article shows how different historical paths generate distinct architectural languages of democracy.

The analysis situates architecture within broader theories of space, symbolism, and political culture, drawing on Lefebvre's notion of socially produced space, Habermas' concept of publicness, and semiotic approaches to the built environment. Architecture is treated as a nonverbal rhetoric that conveys authority, inclusion, transparency, and hierarchy through materiality, scale, form, and urban placement. Through close readings of public buildings and urban ensembles in Washington D.C. and Copenhagen, the paper demonstrates how these spatial grammars encode divergent democratic ideals.

In the United States, the monumental classicism of Capitol Hill, the axial plan of Washington, and the republic's pantheon of memorials articulate a vision of democracy grounded in clarity, balance, and civic idealism. The city's spatial organisation performs the separation of powers, while its monumental buildings create a symbolic distance designed to inspire respect for the constitutional order. American democracy thus expresses itself architecturally through a language of heroic symbolism, rational geometry, and national myth-making.

In Denmark, by contrast, democratic architecture emerges not from rupture but from reinterpretation. Buildings such as Christiansborg, Copenhagen's City Hall, and later the functionalist town halls of the welfare state communicate a quieter ethos of proximity, negotiation, and institutional modesty. Danish public architecture integrates remnants of monarchical space into new democratic meanings, emphasising accessibility, administrative pragmatism, and everyday publicness rather than monumental spectacle. Its democratic message lies less in symbolic elevation and more in material honesty, human-scaled design, and spatial openness.

By placing these traditions side by side, the article highlights how democratic values are translated into material form: American architecture privileges symbolic coherence and narrative grandeur, whereas Danish architecture foregrounds social trust and institutional continuity. The comparison ultimately shows that democratic architecture is neither universal nor stylistically fixed, but a dynamic cultural expression shaped by each polity's historical self-understanding.

POL22 Strategic Communication, Diplomacy, and Institutional Voice

PP 1010 Strategic Communication as Public Diplomacy Practice: EU Delegations between visibility, legitimacy, and power. This paper examines how European Union Delegations use communication campaigns as instruments of political positioning and legitimacy-building

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Public diplomacy is increasingly enacted not only through high-level political discourse but through everyday strategic communication practices implemented by international institutions on the ground. This paper examines how the European

Union Delegations (EUDs) operationalise public diplomacy through campaign-based strategic communication in three contrasting political and cultural contexts: Armenia, Moldova, and Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR).

The study adopts a qualitative, practice-based research design combining participant observation, analysis of campaign strategies and materials, and comparative reflection across three EU Delegation in contexts in which the author was directly involved in designing and delivering the communication strategy. Rather than treating the EU communication as a top-down transmission of political messages, the paper approaches it through a situational lense, almost like a negotiated process directly impacted by the adaptive practices shaped by local political constraints, media ecosystems, and audience expectations (EU and local ones).

In Armenia and Moldova, EU communication operates in politically saturated environments marked by contested reform agendas, polarisation, and competing geopolitical narratives about Europe and sovereignty. Here, communication strategies must balance visibility and value-promotion with the risks of political overexposure, instrumentalisation, or public fatigue. In contrast, the Lao PDR case represents a fundamentally different configuration of political communication: a tightly regulated media environment, low baseline awareness of the EU, and strong constraints on explicit political messaging. In this context, a large-scale strategic communication campaign was designed to prioritise indirect narrative positioning, youth-oriented storytelling, cultural localisation, and development-focused framing, effectively repositioning the EU from a perceived "donor" to a long-term development partner embedded in everyday social imaginaries.

Across the three cases, the paper identifies strategic communication as a form of everyday public diplomacy in which legitimacy is constructed less through formal political argument and more through narrative presence, emotional resonance, cultural translation, and symbolic alignment. Campaign instruments—such as storytelling formats, visual culture, participatory mechanisms, and influencer-mediated communication—function not merely as outreach tools but as infrastructures of political meaning-making.

The comparative analysis highlights three recurring tensions structuring EU public diplomacy in practice: (1) the tension between strategic visibility and political sensitivity; (2) the tension between coherent institutional identity and contextual narrative adaptation; and (3) the tension between normative ambition and communicative feasibility under sistem-specific constraints. These tensions reveal how political communication in international governance is not simply a matter of message control, but of continuous negotiation between institutional objectives, local power structures, and audience interpretive frameworks.

Research questions guiding the paper are:

1. How do EU Delegations enact public diplomacy through strategic communication practices at field level?
2. How do political and media environments shape the form and limits of institutional political communication?
3. What kinds of political legitimacy are produced through campaign-based communication rather than formal political discourse?

The paper contributes to political communication and public diplomacy scholarship by shifting analytical attention from macro-level narratives to the micro-practices of institutional communication, showing how geopolitical meaning is constructed, softened, or deferred through everyday strategic communication. More broadly, it argues for understanding public diplomacy not only as foreign policy communication, but as a form of narrative governance exercised through culturally rooted communication practices.

POL22 Strategic Communication, Diplomacy, and Institutional Voice

PP 1011 Mapping EU influence: How supranational communication shapes national media themes

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This study investigates whether the European Union (EU) has agenda-building power over national media by shaping the thematic structure of EU-related reporting across Europe, using Germany and the United Kingdom as examples. While political communication research has extensively examined how the EU is portrayed in national media, existing studies largely focus on issue salience, framing, discourse, patterns or external drivers and pay limited attention to agenda-building processes. Moreover, agenda-building research has rarely conceptualised media discourse as a relational structure in which themes are systematically connected rather than appearing in isolation. This study addresses these limitations by analysing EU agenda-building as a temporal and structural process operating through thematic networks.

Theoretically, the study builds on agenda-building and network theory, as well as research on the European public sphere. It conceptualises EU agenda-building as the capacity of supranational institutions not only to promote specific issues, but to shape the networked relationships between themes through which the EU is represented in national media. From this perspective, EU agenda-building is observed when thematic emphases and co-occurrence patterns in EU-level communication are reproduced in national media discourse. It is also argued that EU agenda-building power depends on national media systems and political contexts. Germany and the UK constitute a particularly informative comparison due to their different media system characteristics and historically different relationships with European integration.

Empirically, the study draws on a large corpus of EU-level communication, primarily European Commission press releases and speeches, and EU-related reporting from leading German (*FAZ, SZ, Handelsblatt*) and UK (*The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Independent*) news outlets. Applying themes as nodes, separate thematic co-occurrence networks are constructed for EU-level communication and for national media coverage. Agenda-building dynamics are examined using a combination of methods. First, temporal analyses of thematic salience assess whether themes emphasised in EU communication at one point in time are also prominent in national media. Second, network analysis metrics are used to evaluate whether the structural organisation of themes in national media mirrors EU thematic configurations. This includes analyses of centrality measures, which examine whether themes central in EU networks later occupy central positions in national media discourse, indicating the adoption of EU-promoted thematic structures.

The findings reveal cross-national differences in the EU's agenda-building power. While both German and UK media exhibit clustered thematic network structures, the German thematic network is denser, more integrated, and more closely aligned with EU-level discourse. In contrast, the UK thematic network is more fragmented and selectively receptive to EU agenda signals. EU-driven themes are primarily adopted when they align with conflict-oriented narratives.

This study demonstrates that the EU does exercise agenda-building power to some extent, but this power is uneven and mediated by national media environments. By conceptualising agenda-building as a relational network process, the study offers a novel methodological contribution to political communication research and provides new insights into the conditions under which supranational actors can shape national public discourse.

POL23 Computational Methods for Political Discourse Analysis

PP 1001 Black box populism: Systematic context effects in LLM-based measurement of populist ideology

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While there is strong theoretical consensus defining populism as a thin-centered ideology, applying this construct in comparative research remains methodologically complex. Populism inevitably attaches to distinct host ideologies that vary systematically across contexts, ranging from exclusionary nationalism in Europe (Shehaj et al., 2021) to the authoritarian populism seen in established autocracies (Ersoy & Karakoç, 2021) or clientelistic strategies in Latin America (Olivas Osuna, 2021). CConsequently, reliable measurement requires detecting diverse signals—from the nativist rhetoric of consolidated democracies to the state-driven mobilization of autocrats. However, manual content analysis at scale incurs prohibitive costs in both funding and training for multilingual corpora.

Large language models (LLMs) offer a scalable solution (Farjam et al., 2025) but introduce risks of bias, as they are trained primarily on data from wealthy, English-speaking democracies. We hypothesized that this training would cause performance to degrade in differing political contexts, specifically in autocracies and developing economies where rhetoric centering on sovereignty or regime stability predominate (Olivas Osuna, 2021). This raises the critical question of whether classification patterns from LLMs fail to generalize to theoretically equivalent manifestations of populism in regions with differing socioeconomic realities that human coding may capture.

This study tests these assumptions using the Global Populism Database (Hawkins et al., 2019), containing 1,158 speeches from 73 countries. For our preliminary results, we constructed a stratified sample of 210 speeches from 52 countries, generating 20,635 individual classification events across 7 established open-source model families. The sample mirrors the original distribution, spanning a broad governance spectrum () on the Polity IV scale (where 0 = Autocracy, 1 = Full Democracy), while retaining the source's high-income skew () on the World Bank development index (1 = Low, 4 = High Income). Additionally, it ensures linguistic diversity, with 41.3% of observations drawn from languages outside the top-10 in Common Crawl, a dataset commonly use to train LLMs. We evaluate inter-coder reliability, validity against V-Party expert surveys, and systematic errors across multiple inference configurations.

Our preliminary analysis contradicts assumptions about training data bias. Reliability and validity are consistently highest in Anocracies (=0.52 [0.50, 0.55]; =0.37 [0.33, 0.40]) and lowest in Democracies (=0.42 [0.39, 0.45]; =0.23 [0.20, 0.27]). Ordinal logistic regression reveals that both stronger democratic governance (OR = 0.62 [0.54, 0.72]) and higher income classification (OR = 0.61 [0.59, 0.65]) significantly predict underestimation of populism.. Crucially, these biases remain robust to linguistic controls (OR = 1.01 [95% CI: 1.01, 1.01]), indicating that language availability for the LLM is not the only factor on classification error. It was also observed an emergent instability: minor prompt optimizations introduced stochasticity, highlighting high sensitivity to minor instructional phrasing on prompts.

These findings suggest LLMs do not capture the underlying theoretical construct uniformly. Drawing on similar findings from Heyde et al. (2025), we argue this underperformance in high-income democracies likely stems from model alignment: LLMs may view the rhetoric leaders from stable, wealthy nations as "normative" or "polite," masking populist signals otherwise flagged in diverse contexts. This inversion of expected performance poses challenges for comparative researchers, requiring context-specific validation protocols and documentation of prompts and technical decisions.

POL23 Computational Methods for Political Discourse Analysis

PP 1002 Metaphors for a new era: A critical metaphor analysis of political discourse in the 2021 Catalan election

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The 2021 Catalan election marked a shift from the high-tension plebiscitary logic of previous years. Contrasting with the acute 2012–2017 independence phase, including the referendum of October 1st and the resulting suspension of regional autonomy, the 2021 election represented a return to institutional normality during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research, which constitutes a core part of an ongoing doctoral thesis, examines the strategic use of metaphors in political discourse to frame "country construction" during this period. The analysis explores how different political actors utilized this figurative language to redefine Catalonia's political horizon and manage the exhaustion resulting from earlier years.

In the Catalan context, existing studies have identified the centrality of the independence-constitutionalism axis and the prevalence of the JOURNEY domain to explain sovereignty claims. Authors such as Capdevila and Moragas-Fernández (2014, 2019 and 2023) have demonstrated that metaphors function as anchoring mechanisms that assign specific values to political issues, increasing persuasiveness.

This investigation applies Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as established by Charteris-Black (2004), integrated within Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The corpus comprises 14 key speeches from the lead candidates of each party: their final campaign rallies, their last minute from the public broadcaster's (TV3) televised debate, and the investiture speeches of President Pere Aragonès. The procedure follows three systematic stages: the identification of metaphoric tokens based on semantic tension or rupture of isotopy; the interpretation of conceptual mappings (e.g., journey, building, conflict); and the explanation of their ideological and persuasive functions within the Catalan socio-political contemporary context.

The findings indicate a diversification of metaphorical strategies that challenge the previous centrality of the independence-constitutionalism axis. While the JOURNEY (to independence) domain remains prevalent, it is highly contested: Salvador Illa (candidate for the Socialist Party, who represented institutional restoration) employs metaphors of "returning" or "turning the page" to conceptualize Catalonia as a book to be read forward, whereas ERC (pro-independence Republican Left) frames the path as a "via àmplia" (broad path) to broaden the pro-independence majority. Notably, President Pere Aragonès explicitly utilizes the Scottish 2014 referendum as a metaphorical benchmark, urging the Spanish state "to act as the United Kingdom"

The BUILDING domain has evolved from "laying foundations" for a new state to the "reconstruction" of social welfare, with ERC highlighting "republican walls" as symbols of a new stability. In contrast, polarizing right-wing actors like VOX utilize aggressive CONFLICT metaphors, framing the previous decade as a "mafia-led coup" or an "invasion," while En Comú Podem (anti-independence Republican Left) redefines conflict through the "social shield" metaphor to prioritize economic protection over national identity.

Metaphors in this campaign functioned as essential cognitive tools to navigate the transition toward a post-process and post-pandemic political era. Strategic reification and personification allowed actors to legitimize new alliances and manage public expectations by projecting a sense of movement or reconstruction. The study demonstrates that metaphor selection was not merely an aesthetic choice, but a conscious ideological effort to redefine the collective identity of a renewed Catalonia.

Keywords

political communication, metaphor, critical discourse analysis, Catalan elections, independence

POL23 Computational Methods for Political Discourse Analysis

PP 1003 Framing conflict and peace: A Large Language Model approach to the analysis of Colombian presidential speeches (2002–2025)

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While previous research has examined the role of the news media in the Colombian conflict (Rey & Bonilla, 2004) or in recent peace negotiations (Ortega Chávez, 2025), far less attention has been paid to how political discourse itself constructs narratives of conflict and peace. This paper addresses this gap by analysing how Colombian presidents across the last four administrations have framed civil conflict and peace in their official speeches. Spanning 23 years of presidential communication, the study examines 7,350 speeches delivered by Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010), Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018), Iván Duque (2018–2022), and Gustavo Petro (2022–2025).

Building on recent advances in computational analysis of political discourse (Bonikowski et al., 2022; Bonikowski & Stuhler, 2022; Licht & Sczepanski, 2025), the study employs a supervised machine learning framework using Transformer-based neural language models, such as BERT (Devlin et al., 2019) and RoBERTa (Liu et al., 2019), to classify text. The methodological design consists of three stages. First, a manually annotated dataset (n = 2,000) is created to label paragraphs that explicitly or implicitly reference the Colombian armed conflict or peacebuilding initiatives. Second, this annotated data is used to fine-tune a Transformer model to perform contextualized paragraph-level classification across the entire corpus (n = 7,350), identifying all instances where presidents discuss conflict or peace. Third, the resulting sub-corpus of classified paragraphs is analysed using SBERT-based topic modeling and thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and discursive patterns related to conflict and peace.

The paper is primarily concerned with establishing a robust analytical framework for tracing longitudinal changes in presidential framing. The study enables systematic comparison across administrations, making it possible to trace shifts in how conflict and peace are discursively constructed, including changes in moral justification and strategic framing over time. The paper offers two key contributions. Methodologically, it advances the application of text-as-data approaches (see Do et al., 2024) for large-scale political text classification in Spanish, an area that remains underdeveloped. Empirically, it seeks to provide the first longitudinal, computational account of how Colombian presidents have framed conflict and peace over two decades, thereby complementing existing research on media discourse and expanding our understanding of elite political communication in the context of Colombia's long-running internal armed conflict.

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POL23 Computational Methods for Political Discourse Analysis

PP 1004 Language as strategy: A semantic analysis of party competition in Germany

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Democratic systems thrive on political debates between parties regarding issues and political measures. In this context, parties debate in parliament, ideally aiming to translate their positions into legislation. Therefore, it is crucial for them to identify with certain issues and demonstrate competence in these areas to be elected as worthy representatives. The perception of parties' connection to issues and their perceived competence is described by the theory of issue ownership (Walgrave et al., 2015). However, to claim an issue, parties must be seen as having distinct positions on the topic compared to their political rivals. These positions are typically declared in parliamentary debates and can be influenced by the issue's salience, e.g., by recent events or increased media coverage, or by other parties taking up similar issues or adopting more radical stances. This can lead to diversification (e.g., claiming new issues) or approximation (e.g., competing on issues). An example of the latter is the convergence of the mainstream German parties to the AfD's (Germany's right-wing party) position on migration (Atzpodien, 2022). But how do these realignments manifest in speeches and parliamentary discussions?

In our study, we examine the semantic diversification of party discourse in the German Bundestag regarding several central topics. Our analysis is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the semantic differentiation develop over time among the parties in the German Bundestag regarding central topics?

RQ2: Which words characterize periods of semantic differentiation?

To answer these questions, we use a corpus of plenary speeches from the German Bundestag (N = 49,056) ranging from October 24, 2017, to December 18, 2025. We measure semantic diversification across parliamentary party groups using automated text analysis techniques, drawing on embeddings-based distance measures and distributional language models via the conText package (Rodriguez et al., 2023) to capture similarities and differences in the language that parties use when addressing the same issue.

In our preliminary analysis of the topics of climate change, migration, and pensions, we find several moments of semantic differentiation in our dataset. As expected, the right-wing AfD deviates from the mainstream parties on almost all topics and over all time periods. When it comes to climate issues, however, we cannot identify any significant differences between

the Greens and the other parties. This is inconsistent with its image as a climate party. Furthermore, in the lead-up to federal elections, we observe a trend toward semantic divergence, whereby parties refine their thematic profiles. This makes strategic sense, as parties use their parliamentary communications to position themselves in the run-up to elections. Unlike the other topics, the pension debate shows no clear longitudinal trends. Instead, it is characterized by inconsistent and fragmented positioning. According to Politbarometer survey data (www.forschungsgruppe.de), the German population considers this issue significantly less relevant, making it less interesting for parties to develop a distinct position. For the final presentation, we plan to qualitatively investigate periods of semantic differentiation between parties using nearest neighbors and contexts (RQ2).

POL24 Citizen Engagement, Inclusion, and Platform Governance

PP 1114 The good, the bad, and the funny meme: How perceived humor, political interest, and knowledge shape engagement with political memes

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Political memes have become a prominent form of visual political communication on social networking sites (SNS), increasingly moving beyond subcultural spaces into mainstream political discourse. A defining feature of political memes is their reliance on humor, which allows users to engage with political information in ways that are affective, playful, and socially meaningful. While prior research has demonstrated that political memes can stimulate engagement, existing studies typically focus either on mobilizing characteristics of meme content or on individual user traits in isolation. We still know relatively little about how humorous meme content translates into engagement, and how this process connects to users' political dispositions and their evaluations of specific memes.

To address this gap, our study examines how perceived meme humor drives meme-induced engagement on SNS, and how this relationship is conditioned by stance congruence and individual-level political traits. We focus on political interest and objective and subjective political knowledge as key individual-level characteristics and conceptualize meme-induced emotions as mediating mechanisms linking humorous evaluations to engagement intentions.

Empirically, we draw on an original survey conducted in the Czech Republic in autumn 2025, shortly after the general election (N = 2,064). Besides questions about individual attitudes and online behavior, respondents were presented with six political memes embedded in the questionnaire. Four memes featured leading election contenders, the populist leader Andrej Babiš and anti-populist leader Petr Fiala, while two addressed the housing crisis without referencing specific politicians. The memes also varied in communicative style, employing either benevolent or corrective humor. For each meme, respondents evaluated perceived meme humor, stance congruence, and emotional reactions, and reported the likelihood of them engaging with the meme if encountered online. Meme-specific engagement intentions included liking, commenting or reading of comments, sharing (publicly or privately), and seeking additional information.

Using multilevel models, we examine how humorous meme evaluations translate into engagement intentions, and under what conditions these effects are amplified or constrained. We expect that perceived meme humor is a key driver of meme-induced engagement across engagement modes, while stance congruence conditions whether humorous memes prompt more active forms of engagement. Emotional reactions, particularly anger, are expected to partially mediate these effects, indicating that humor operates not only as a cognitive evaluation but also through affective responses. We also anticipate that individual-level political interest and knowledge structure overall engagement propensity and moderate responsiveness to humorous meme content.

By centering humor as a core mechanism of meme-induced engagement, this study demonstrates that political memes mobilize users not simply through content or audience traits alone, but through the interaction between humorous evaluations, emotional responses, and political predispositions. Our study thus offers new insights into the role of political memes in online engagement, affective polarization and political learning on SNS.

POL24 Citizen Engagement, Inclusion, and Platform Governance

PP 1116 Rupture and renew: Transforming political communication for marginalised young people

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Significant concerns exist regarding the news consumption and political participation of young adults who experience inequality. They are amongst the most likely to avoid news (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022) and the least likely to vote (O'Loughlin and Sloam, 2022). Existing research points to a *rupture* in institutional politics; this demographic does not feel represented by political parties and legacy news media (Arguedas et al., 2023; Tabor, Kalogeropoulos and Rossini, 2025). Many fear the long-term implications of such marginalisation on democracy. Drawing on 47 semi-structured interviews with a mixture of journalists and "newsfluencers" (Hurcombe, 2025) (n = 14), representatives from political parties—including elected representatives, campaign staff, and communication professionals (n = 15)—and young adults who experience inequality in England (n = 18), this paper explores the causes of this rupture and potential strategies to address it.

Interviewees offered a vision of how to *renew* this relationship. Journalists are keen to embrace innovations in storytelling that have flourished on social media, including empowering journalists to produce vertical video through individual accounts, adopting the tone, format, and style used on social platforms, and providing more opportunities for audience engagement with this population. Still, they are conscious of the challenging working conditions in the sector for those seeking to implement them, with economic pressures leading to intense workloads where daily publishing targets minimise time with the communities they serve and for innovation and training. Newsfluencers and peripheral journalists—including content creators, influencers, and citizen journalists—argue that they offer meaningful representation, should be perceived as legitimate political actors, and require more training, financial and structural support. Campaigners, media staff, and elected representatives want to see political parties offer more genuine opportunities for young citizens to shape policy, but fear that the current electoral reality in England—where older generations vote in greater numbers—makes this unrealistic.

The paper concludes by discussing the synergies, tensions, and systemic barriers that exist to the solutions proposed by the three key actors involved in political communication (McNair, 2018).

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POL24 Citizen Engagement, Inclusion, and Platform Governance

PP 1117 Digital political participation in German municipalities: Old and new digital and algorithmic divides

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Digital political participation includes all actions that citizens voluntarily undertake – employing networked media – with the aim of influencing decisions at various levels of the political system (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2010). Digital political participation is seen as a useful tool for involving citizens in political decision-making, but in many European states including Germany, there is currently neither a national inventory of municipal offerings and their characteristics nor sufficient knowledge about the scope, purposes, circumstances, opportunities, and risks of using artificial intelligence (AI) in such endeavors (Vasilakopoulos et al., 2024).

This paper presents the results of a nationwide survey on the application of digital political participation in German municipalities and on supply-side contextual conditions that determine the provision of such procedures. It provides evidence that municipalities continue to face structural digital divides and that, at the same time, a new algorithmic divide is emerging in the context of AI tools.

Methodology

A nationwide online survey of all 10,751 German municipalities was conducted using a two-part questionnaire (QN): QN1 covered general digital political participation experiences and structural characteristics of the municipalities; QN2 covered details of the last two digital political participation procedures in the municipality. At the time of submission, 2,183 municipalities had partially responded to QN1 (20.3% response rate), and 1,815 municipalities had largely completed the questionnaire (16.9%). The distribution of participants corresponds to the actual structure of German municipalities and allows for representative insights.

Key findings

Firstly, we found a digital divide that is structural: present findings indicate a correlation between municipality size and digital political participation implementation. While almost all large cities offer digital political participation, only 14.3% of rural municipalities have experience with digital political participation. This points to imbalances in access to digital forms of participation. At the same time, the question arises as to whether it is a disadvantage for smaller communities not to offer digital political participation, as negotiation processes between the municipality and residents may be better resolved through offline and informal channels.

Secondly, findings also point to the risk of an algorithmic divide (Yu, 2020). Only a minority of municipalities currently employ AI in digital political participation. The use of AI focuses on editorial tasks: In local governments that use AI for digital political participation, the dominant applications are text creation (47.8%) and translation (45.5%), followed by

results presentation (25.6%) and automated post evaluation (20.3%). In contrast, AI is used rather cautiously for purposes such as hate speech detection (13.5%) or data protection violations (8.4%). AI-supported communication is thus gradually establishing itself but is concentrated in editorial applications. The cautious use of AI in content moderation and hate speech detection points to unresolved normative and technical challenges.

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POL24 Citizen Engagement, Inclusion, and Platform Governance

PP 1118 The humor-ification of politics: Deepfakes and visual distraction during election campaigns

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Deepfakes have changed the landscape of political communication by transforming the traditional campaign discourse. The strategic use of this technology in political campaigns has generated new debates about misinformation, authenticity, and trust in democratic systems, and all of these aspects have already been analyzed. While previous research has focused specifically on the manipulative or informational side of deepfakes, the relation between deepfake technology and political humor still remains underexplored. The paper states that political deepfakes are not necessarily deceptive, but instead, more and more become humorous, satirical, and affect-oriented types of visual persuasion, which transform attention, engagement, and the quality of political discourse. The study, in this way, promotes a reconceptualization of deepfakes in the form of strategic instruments of politainment. Two research questions were discussed in the paper: (RQ1) What are the main strategic functions of humor and satire in political deepfakes used to engage the public? and (RQ2) What patterns of audience engagement are associated with the use of humor in political deepfakes in digital campaign contexts? To provide answers to these questions, the study uses a qualitative interpretive content analysis of a purposive sample of ten political deepfakes, published between 2023 and April 2025 on major social media platforms, including X, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. The sample is diverse in geopolitical contexts: the United States, Turkey, Argentina, France, Spain, the Philippines, and India, which makes it possible to compare sensitivity to various political cultures and political campaigns. All the cases were subjected to a structured coding scheme consisting of fourteen categories of analysis that included strategic intent, humorous configuration, narrative framing, affective appeal, platform dynamics, and patterns of circulation. Despite this diversity of actors, the objectives of the deepfakes cluster around three dominant strategic purposes: delegitimizing political opponents, through ridicule or insinuation (U.S. Biden cases, Turkey, Argentina, Spain, Philippines); mobilizing or engaging supporters, through entertaining, identity-affirming content (Argentina, Vox Europa, India); and image management and agenda promotion, where humor serves a softening or humanizing function (France, India). These objectives demonstrate that humor operates both offensively (attack-oriented) and defensively or promotional, depending on campaign positioning. The comparative analysis shows that humorous political deepfakes function as strategically designed communicative artifacts, where humor operates as an affective interface between technology, narrative, and platform dynamics. Across cases, humor consistently facilitates interaction and circulation, but its broader political significance is mediated by content design, dissemination context, audience alignment, and virality. Rather than producing uniform effects, humorous deepfakes reveal a complex interplay between entertainment and political strategy, confirming that their power lies less in deception per se than in their capacity to reshape how political content is framed, consumed, and shared in digital environments. Therefore, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on synthetic media, affective politics, and post-truth culture by repositioning deepfakes as artifacts of humor-driven visual persuasion rather than purely instruments of deceit.

Keywords

Deepfake, Humor, satire, election campaign, political communication, visual persuasion

POL25 Influencers, Persona, and the Mediation of Political Elites

PP 1104 Does the dog watch? When and how the media reports on political elites' repositioning

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When political elites change their minds about a policy issue, media coverage of these shifts is essential for informing the public. Despite growing attention to elite position shifts in the party competition literature (e.g., Meguid, 2005; Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2018), and emerging research on voter reactions to these shifts (e.g., Nasr & Hoes, 2024; Meijers, 2025), little research has examined the role of the media. In this paper, we present the first study on when and how the media report on position changes of political elites. To this end, we create a novel dataset using a large corpus of Swiss news articles from the past 20 years, in order to identify factors associated with the intensity and tonality of media coverage of political

elites' position changes. Through inductive, manual coding we develop a typology of position changes which we apply to the entire corpus using a transfer learning approach. In general, we expect a negative tonality in news articles about position changes, since previous literature on electoral promises (e.g., Müller 2020) suggests that broken promises are covered more frequently and more negatively than kept promises. Drawing on news value theory (Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, 1965), we hypothesize that the intensity and tonality of media coverage depend on the characteristics of the position change and of the political elite who repositions. Notably, we hypothesize that a higher degree of unexpectedness and a greater inconsistency result in more negative news coverage, particularly among radical elites and those in prominent political roles (e.g., Van Aelst et al. 2008; Vos, 2016). Our findings contribute to understanding how the media amplifies or diminishes attention to political elites' repositioning. These dynamics are crucial for understanding how political media coverage influences political competition and political behavior in Western democracies.

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POL25 Influencers, Persona, and the Mediation of Political Elites

PP 1105 From policy to persona: Effects of social media political communication on evaluations of politicians

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On social media, two markers dominate political communication strategies: privatization (Stanyer, 2013) and a colloquial language style, both central to the populist communication repertoire (de Vreese et al., 2018; Ernst et al., 2019). Although their use is well documented on the supply side, little is known about how these choices reshape evaluations of political actors in short-form video formats (Instagram Reels, TikTok).

We test these effects in a pre-registered 2×2 between-subjects experiment conducted in France (N ≈ 1,400; representative sample). Two factors are manipulated: privatization (with vs. without) and language style (formal vs. colloquial), supplemented by a non-factorial video control condition. The stimuli, produced specifically for the study, are Instagram/TikTok-style videos (vertical 9:16, face-to-camera, locked-off single take, 40 seconds), politically neutral and strictly standardized (same actor, duration, framing, lighting; controlled setting and attire). Three successive pretests (scripts, videos, expert validation) ensure manipulation validity. Dependent variables include four traits (leadership, competence, integrity, warmth), a global evaluation (feeling thermometer), and voting intention; thematic evaluations of perceived policy program quality (economy, international relations, education, health, environment, immigration, security) and covariates complete the design. Analyses rely on OLS regressions for each dependent variable, including a Privatization × Style interaction and planned contrasts.

Our results show that privatization increases scores on warmth and integrity, as well as global evaluation (feeling thermometer), but reduces competence and leadership. By contrast, a colloquial style lowers competence, leadership, and integrity, while increasing warmth and global evaluation. An interaction also emerges: the Privatization × Colloquial condition maximizes warmth and global evaluation, whereas the Non-privatization × Colloquial condition minimizes competence and leadership. For voting intention, the colloquial style increases intention relative to the formal style; privatization has a null or slightly negative effect.

Thus, this study clarifies when and how short videos shift trait judgments, global evaluation, and voting intention. Privatization and a colloquial style shift the basis of voting—from policy programs and competence toward relational signals (proximity, warmth). This shift can bias the selection of politicians and weaken democratic accountability. It may also undermine deliberative quality and equality of access to attention. Hence the strategic stakes (format choices) and the normative requirements (civic education, online campaign norms, transparency about formats).

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POL25 Influencers, Persona, and the Mediation of Political Elites

PP 1106 A necessary evil? Politicians' perspectives on their relationship with journalists

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The relationship between politicians and journalists is traditionally seen as close, sometimes described as an alliance of "bedfellows" (Rosenstiel, 1993), or even as "incestuous" (Charron, 1994). Others have described this relationship as more strained, marked by mutual cynicism and distrust (e.g., Bennett & Pfetsch, 2018; Van Aelst & Aalberg, 2011). While some healthy mistrust between the two actors is expected due to their conflicting goals and is essential to a healthy democratic debate (Berkowitz, 2019), this relationship is becoming increasingly hostile. Politicians nowadays more openly attack traditional media (e.g., Egelhofer et al., 2021; Schwörer, 2021) and bypass them in favor of direct communication through social media (Marquart, Ohme, & Möller, 2020).

This wrenched relationship is potentially problematic, as it may lead to behaviors that are detrimental to democracy and the role of the news media within it. If journalists face increasing hostility and politicians sidestep traditional accountability channels, political communication may shift in ways that reinforce polarization, hinder informed citizenship, and encourage populist rhetoric. However, we have limited insight into how politicians themselves perceive and navigate their relationship with the news media.

This study addresses that gap by exploring politicians' experiences and views regarding their interactions with journalists. We conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 75 members of parliament (MPs) in Belgium. We asked how they evaluate their relationship with journalists, whether they feel this relationship has changed over time, and how conflictual interactions arise, are perceived, and influence their behavior. For example, do such conflictual experiences lead them to communicate less with the media, adopt a more hostile stance, or bypass the press?

While the analysis of the interview data is still ongoing, we can already provide preliminary insights. Regarding conflict, politicians mainly complain about unfavorable framing, particularly in headlines, misrepresentation due to decontextualized quotes, and unequal access to media platforms. Although this discontent seems to exist across party lines, frustrations are especially pronounced among radical party politicians. They note that their contributions (e.g., parliamentary questions) are sometimes used in media coverage without proper attribution, and they express concerns about limited access and unfavorable framing.

However, despite these criticisms and an apparent strained relationship, very few politicians appear to want to distance themselves or sideline traditional media. While some radical parties acknowledge that they rely heavily on social media because they feel underrepresented in traditional outlets, they still frequently send press releases and actively seek media contact. In that sense, no one seems to bypass the press, acknowledging that they still need the media for political success and to reach audiences. Overall, the politicians described an ongoing dependence on traditional media, even in the age of social media, where it has become increasingly easy to communicate directly with the public (Jungherr, 2016). Even politicians who place themselves outside of the mainstream still eagerly seek the attention of traditional mainstream media. Thus, it seems the relationship between journalists and politicians may best be characterized as "uneasy" bedfellows—or, as some politicians suggest, a necessary evil.

POL25 Influencers, Persona, and the Mediation of Political Elites

PP 1107 Mapping the 'outsiders': Political communication agencies and the marketisation of politics in Italy

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In the past two decades, the increasing professionalisation of political campaigns has fostered the expansion of a diverse ecosystem of political consultants whose activities extend well beyond party organisations or institutional bodies (Medvic, 2003; Grossman, 2009). As parties have increasingly internalised professional communication functions to manage the day-to-day reputational demands of political leadership, most Western democracies have witnessed the consolidation of a parallel, market-oriented industry of political communication agencies, through which communication and marketing services are externalised to political clients on a short-term, campaign-basis (Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001; Norris, 2000, Diamanti,

2016; Sampugnaro and Montemagno, 2021). Existing literature identifies them as political communication 'outsiders': professionals operating outside the political field who mobilise specialised expertise, technical know-how and social capital to deliver services that frequently intersect with commercial and corporate sectors (Negrine et al., 2007). While studies on the broader phenomenon of the professionalisation of political communication abound, political communication industries have been empirically underinvestigated, particularly in non-Anglo-American contexts.

Italy, whose political and electoral system has favoured the growth of a market that provides political communication services on a short-term and project-based basis, represents a compelling case study to examine this phenomenon (Cacciotto, 2014). In this context, these professionals have historically acted in the background, often alongside party staff, complicating efforts to empirically assess their role and relevance. Furthermore, the lack of professional registries, formal occupational categories, or institutional classification mechanisms further obscures a sector characterised by fragmentation, complexity, and opacity. As a consequence, no comprehensive overview of the Italian political communication industry operating outside party structures currently exists.

This study aims to fill this gap by presenting the first systematic mapping of Italian political communication agencies positioned outside party organisations. It does so by adopting a digital methods approach to trace the online footprints of agencies that offer, or have previously offered, communication services to political candidates, parties, or other political organisations at the municipal, regional, national, or supra-national level. An iterative and advanced online search strategy using Google and Ecosia and complemented by manual validation resulted in the identification of 76 agencies whose involvement in political communication ranges from core to marginal. Inclusion criteria were based on explicit service description, public disclosure of political clients, or campaign-related projects within online portfolios.

Focusing on the organisational presence, service profiles, and digital visibility of political communication agencies allows us to reconceptualise political communication "outsiders" not as marginal auxiliaries, but as a loosely institutionalised industry actively involved in shaping contemporary political communication practices. This work-in-progress research introduces a reproducible dataset and offers initial descriptive insights on the Italian political communication industry, including agencies' geographical distribution, degree of specialisation, service provision, patterns of social media adoption, and the visibility of political clients. More broadly, the study aims to contribute to debates on the marketisation of politics and to advance exploratory research on political communication professionalism beyond party-centred frameworks while critically engaging with digital methods as tools for investigating opaque media industries (Rogers, 2024).

POL25 Influencers, Persona, and the Mediation of Political Elites

PP 1108 How news influencers signal credibility in the 2024 U.S. Election

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The rapid rise of news influencers has disrupted political communication by challenging gatekeeping and agenda-setting roles and taking on functions once held by journalists and campaign surrogates. While prior research has examined credibility construction in the domains of marketing and traditional political communication, we know far less about how digital news influencers establish credibility in political contexts and how such strategies resonate across partisan groups.

This study investigates the mechanisms through which news influencers construct credibility, employing a framework informed by influencer marketing and political authenticity research. By distinguishing between appeals to expertise, integrity, benevolence, and authenticity, we analyze how these strategies influence audience reception.

First, we conduct a large-scale content analysis of all posts (N = 91,133) posts made by the 50 most followed U.S. news influencers per platform (Instagram, TikTok, and X) during the eight weeks leading up to the 2024 U.S. Election. Using a computational approach validated against human coding, we examine how credibility is signaled and whether influencers' reliance on different credibility cues differs by the partisan leaning of the influencer.

Second, we complement this supply-side analysis with a survey experiment. Participants are recruited through Prolific and balanced across party lines. Stimuli are derived from the content analysis: we identify common prototypes of influencer communication to generate short, prototypical videos. As influencers, we use AI avatars to isolate rhetorical strategies without the confound of human celebrity. This design allows us to test whether certain credibility appeals are differentially persuasive for Democrats and Republicans and whether these differences help explain influencers' success in spreading political information.

By integrating cross-platform data with experimental evidence, this study advances the understanding of how credibility is constructed and leveraged in digital political communication. It contributes to debates on partisan psychology, political authenticity, and the mechanisms enabling influencers to maintain authority in polarized online environments.

RAS01 Radio, Culture and Society: Audiences, Territory and Narrative Forms

PP 0499 What perceptions of local radio by its journalists and listeners tell us about its role and future

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Local news is considered vital to the functioning of local communities and the engagement of citizens in local democracies (Fenton 2011; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Nielsen 2015). Local radio's role is to bring to the fore issues relevant to the local communities it serves. However, local radio in the UK is at a turning point, with the BBC reducing its local radio output and commercial radio, largely owned by a small number of media groups, moving away from localism while maintaining only a minimal local news output. The remaining independent commercial stations often maintain strong links with the local communities they serve but struggle to provide any substantive local news coverage.

Using the theoretical frameworks of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; 1997) and localism (Napoli 2001; Cowling 2005), the present study aims to contribute to a limited body of knowledge on the role of local radio as seen by those who make it and those who listen to it. It employs extensive one-to-one interviews with 30 local BBC and commercial radio journalists and station managers, as well as four listener focus groups with 16 participants in total, in order to answer the following research questions:

- How do local radio journalists in the UK reflect on their experience of practice in meeting the informational needs of their listeners?
- How do local radio journalists and listeners perceive the role of radio in providing news?
- What are the views of both groups regarding the future of local radio in the UK?

The study finds that both local radio journalists and listeners are aware that radio in the UK is at a turning point, with numerous challenges lying ahead. Journalists understand that resources are shrinking while the competition for consumers' attention is growing. They say that traditional roles of local radio as provider of local news and forum for debate are under threat as new, digital platforms offer an alternative. In the context of major changes in the ways radio is produced and consumed, the present study shows that commercial radio seems best placed to take the advantage of the new technologies available, while the BBC and independent stations see their strengths in providing for under-served communities. All journalists interviewed still express optimism regarding the short-to-medium future of local radio.

Listeners, however, point out they are trying to make sense of the fast-changing and "overwhelming" media ecosystem. They say they value local radio and listen to it; they express a desire to stay informed, but reluctantly admit that in the current global context, local news does not matter to them very much. Their sense of civic duty is implied but does not seem to be the major determinant of listening habits.

The present study makes a contribution to a limited body of research on contemporary local radio. It does so at the time of significant changes the medium is going through and against a great deal of uncertainty regarding its future.

RAS01 Radio, Culture and Society: Audiences, Territory and Narrative Forms

PP 0500 Radio art, documentality, archive: Transnational practices

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Contemporary research on sound media is developing within the context of an intensive cultural reorientation known as the auditory turn (Matusiak 2024; Pleszczyński 2007), which is reshaping both the humanities and communicative practices by shifting attention from visuality toward affective, relational, and embodied modes of listening. In parallel, art studies have developed the perspective of the archive turn (Callahan 2022; Eichhorn 2013), which emphasizes the crucial role of archives, inscription practices, and the materiality of traces in constructing memory, identity, and relations of power. Popular audio-documentary forms—particularly investigative and true-crime podcasts (Sherrill 2020)—increasingly rely on narrative appeal (Boling & Hull 2018) and algorithmic visibility, which leads to a "flattening" of the documentary landscape and the dominance of formats that reinforce predictable storytelling structures.

This presentation situates the analysis (structural and genological) of radio-auditory documentality precisely within these two parallel turns—the auditory and the archival. The point of departure is the notion of documentality understood as a creative strategy that does not rely solely on factuality, but on relationality, archival traces, fragmentariness, and the experience of listening. The aim is to address this gap by examining radio art as a form of documentality distinct from journalistic genres, while taking into account the aesthetic, affective, and experimental properties of the medium.

The proposed approach develops the concept of documentality not as a set of factual criteria, but as a relational strategy of truth-disclosure (Heidegger 1972; Reeves & Stoneman 2014) and as a process of producing inscriptions in the sense of Maurizio Ferraris's (2009) theory of documentality—here adapted to radio-art practices. In this perspective, the sonic document emerges from the interaction between recording, listening, and interpretation, in which affect, trace, voice, and archival fragmentariness jointly co-produce epistemological meaning.

The analysis draws on selected examples of transnational radio art—including materials from New American Radio, European radio experiments, and the Experimental Studio of Polish Radio—and examines how documentality manifests itself through archival reenactment, work with witness voices, transformed field recordings, performative uses of tape, and strategies of resistance to conventional communicative modes.

In contrast to platform-based documentary formats shaped by the logics of algorithmic visibility and narrative predictability, radio art reveals an alternative model of sonic knowledge production—one that brings together affect, archive, and aesthetic excess as modes of understanding. In this sense, the sonic document creates space for marginalized perspectives, polyvocality, and for affect as a form of knowledge. The study demonstrates how radio-art practices engage notions of truth, testimony, and the archive in sound media in an era marked by the crisis of facts.

RAS01 Radio, Culture and Society: Audiences, Territory and Narrative Forms

PP 0501 Territorial zeitgeist in native podcasts on regional public radio platforms in Spain (2024–2025)

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Regional public radio broadcasters in Spain have traditionally been regarded as key institutions for the dissemination of regional culture and for the promotion and development of co-official languages, as established in their founding statutes (García González, 2007; Sierra Sánchez, 2010; Sobrino et al., 2018). In the context of the digital transformation of radio and the reconfiguration of media consumption habits (Pedrero-Esteban & García Lastra, 2019; Terol Bolinches et al., 2021), these broadcasters face the challenge of redefining and expanding their public service mission beyond linear broadcasting. Within this process, native podcasting has become established as a differentiated strategy, distinct from the mere redistribution of radio content on digital platforms (Pérez Alaejos et al., 2018; Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Bonet & Sellas, 2019; Müller et al., 2020).

Hyperlocal content, programming focused on culture and heritage, and the production of audio content in co-official languages and with distinctive regional identities (McHugh, 2016) have become a priority for these broadcasters and their platforms. Conceptual and technological adaptation aims to reach younger audiences, following precedents such as Radio Nacional de España (RNE) (Onieva, 2024) and the BBC in the United Kingdom through their audio platforms (Berry, 2020).

This paper presents a comparative study conducted during 2024 and 2025 of the native podcast offerings of five regional public broadcasting corporations: 3Cat (Catalonia), À Punt Mèdia (Valencian Community), EITB (Basque Country), CRTVG (Galicia), and Canal Sur (Andalusia). The aim is to examine the cultural and linguistic orientation of their podcasting platforms. The study is based on the hypothesis that these contents reinforce the public service mission, constituting a distinctive proposal within the digital audio ecosystem. Podcasts are understood not only as a distribution format but also as an expression of the territorial zeitgeist, defined as the set of sensitivities, imaginaries, social concerns, and cultural practices characteristic of each territory.

The research adopts a qualitative methodology based on descriptive analysis of the podcasts hosted on the official platforms and in-depth interviews with platform managers. The sample selection responds to shared legislative and historical criteria, as these corporations formed the first generation of entities integrated into the Federation of Radio and Television Organizations (FORTA), a non-profit association that brings together regional public radio and television broadcasters, and were pioneers in the development of their own digital platforms.

The analysis considers variables such as content typologies, use of co-official languages, degree of hyperlocality, and the target audiences addressed by the podcasts. The study raises questions about how native podcasts extend the public service function of regional broadcasters through exclusive content, contributing to cultural dissemination and the promotion of co-official languages. It also explores how these audio productions reflect contemporary territorial cultures and strengthen cultural identity and heritage. Finally, it examines how such content connects with younger audiences, migrant communities, and other groups that maintain a symbolic bond with their place of origin.

RAS01 Radio, Culture and Society: Audiences, Territory and Narrative Forms

PP 0502 How affective can news get? Radio reporting on the Slovenian parliamentary election

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In recent decades, societal and media changes have contributed to increasingly personal and emotional engagement with news. As a result, emotion and affect have become central to research on media production and audience engagement,

leading to the so-called "affective turn" (Papacharissi 2015; Kotišová 2019) or "emotional turn" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2019) in communication, media, and journalism studies.

This perspective challenges the notion of objectivity as a widely accepted ideal in hard news reporting (Stenvall 2014). An increasing number of authors question traditional dichotomies such as objective vs. subjective, detached vs. involved, or rational vs. emotional. As Peters (2011) argues, news has always been affective: even the most prototypical "cool" broadcast posture is not unemotional. Contemporary journalism therefore builds not only on accuracy, truthfulness, and expertise, but increasingly also on emotional authenticity (Beckett & Deuze 2016). Consequently, tone and style have become central to generating trust and credibility, allowing for a diversity of emotional styles and more explicit forms of journalistic involvement (Peters 2011; Glück 2021).

Certain journalistic genres, such as commentary or feature stories, have traditionally been considered more suitable for emotional expression, whereas hard news has been framed as incompatible with affectivity. However, recent research highlights the limitations of dispassionate "just the facts" reporting, particularly in contexts of human suffering (Kotišová 2019). At the same time, emotionality in news has shown the potential to raise awareness of social problems (Pajnik 2023) and to intensify public engagement during crises and unfolding events (Papacharissi 2015).

Radio continues to play a significant role in informing audiences and maintaining credible news sources (Wu 2017; Starkey 2017). As an auditory medium, it relies on voice, tone, rhythm, and immediacy, making affect not only a discursive but also a sonic phenomenon. It is precisely these fundamental characteristics of radio style and content that have enabled radio to remain a resilient and trusted news medium despite technological and social changes (Starkey 2017).

In Slovenia, radio remains the most trusted medium, with public service radio ranking as the most trusted news source (EBU 2025). A recent survey (Pajnik 2023) shows that emotional involvement by journalists working in the Slovenian national broadcaster and other legacy media is increasingly accepted, regardless of the medium. Since affect in journalism is relationally generated (Peters 2011), and radio connects with audiences indirectly and in real time, we assume that contemporary radio news reporting also employs affective elements. Drawing on Koivunen et al. (2021) and Stenvall (2008), we conduct a linguistic analysis of radio news reporting on the Slovenian parliamentary election held in March 2026 to address the following research question: to what extent, and through which linguistic devices, are affect and emotion present in radio news bulletins. By doing so, the study extends research on affectivity to radio news journalism, a field that has so far received little systematic attention, and contributes to understanding affective journalism in the context of election reporting.

RAS01 Radio, Culture and Society: Audiences, Territory and Narrative Forms

PP 0503 Knowing your audience: The reshaping of Czech on-demand audio fiction

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Given the oversaturation of content in today's audio industry, producers and institutions face new challenges: they must devise effective strategies to not only engage audiences in a fragmented environment but also to sustain their own relevance. In response to this paradigm shift in the Czech context, both public and private sector actors are differentiating their products by production values for their own on-demand portals. For example, Czech Radio, as the public service broadcaster, emphasises more experimental and online-first productions for its můjRozhlas portal, while the Czech branch of the private audiobook publisher Audiotéka is focusing on high-budget audio series. Together, they offer alternatives to the content from traditional linear stations while operating in a less regulated online environment. To achieve this, institutions must create favourable conditions to ensure that production remains sustainable and relevant. According to Petr Szczepanik and Dorota Vašíčková (2023), this process requires not only transforming internal structures but also forming specialised teams that employ diverse production practices.

This paper aims to explore how on-demand production is transforming institutional commissioning processes and production practices at Czech Radio and Audiotéka, particularly in the area of original audio drama. By engaging with digital environments, institutions can access valuable user data which subsequently inform future production decisions (Napoli 2013; Johnson 2019; van Es & Poell 2020). The decision-making process within production cultures reflects the traditional tension between individual and institutional requirements. However, this dynamic is increasingly conditioned by data outputs, which are interpreted and applied in various ways (Caldwell 2008, 2023). Public metrics serve as production tools for negotiating risks associated with formats and genres, maintaining brand identity, and determining what institutions define as "successful" on-demand audio fiction.

This qualitative analysis draws on semi-structured interviews with the primary decision-makers at můjRozhlas and Audiotéka. It examines how executive strategies shape the production of original audio fiction. Building on theoretical approaches to platformisation and production cultures, the paper uses selected examples to illustrate the commissioning processes and how they contribute to redefining audio on-demand production as a mainstream commodity (Bonini 2015). A comparative analysis of these two institutions reveals that, in the Czech context, on-demand content is shaped by divergent modes of knowing the audience, leading to choices that legitimise the market value of both the products and the institutions. To

grasp the dynamics of the current media landscape, it is essential to monitor not only what audiences listen to but also how producers interpret feedback. These strategies define the shape of current Czech on-demand original audio fiction.

RAS02 Digital Transformations, Podcast Production and the Rise of Synthetic Voices

PP 0825 Deep dive news podcast production: An ethnographic approach

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For almost a decade, newsrooms across the world have been experimenting with news podcasting to engage and strengthen relationships with audiences. As users gravitate increasingly towards on-demand and mobile media consumption, audio journalism in the form of podcasts has become a key component in the innovation processes of established media organisations who seek to adapt to the digital era. Specifically, the deep dive format, pioneered by 'The Daily' by The New York Times and replicated by newspapers, broadcasters, and digitally born publishers in many other countries, has been seen by media scholars and industry professionals as an antidote to news avoidance and as a particularly effective and innovative way of doing podcast journalism (Dowling, 2024; Perdomo & Lindgren, 2025).

However, research on news podcasting remains scarce with most production-oriented studies relying either on content analysis or semi-structured interviews with journalists (see, for example, de Torres et al., 2025; Miller et al., 2022; Nee & Santana, 2022). While these have provided important insights into the characteristics of the podcasts themselves and the strategies of publishers, I argue that more site-intensive approaches are needed to show what it means to work creatively with sound in the specific context of established news organisations. Taking an ethnographic approach, I ask: How do newsroom resources affect the production of deep dive news podcasts (RQ1), and what are the key elements and challenges of successful deep dive news podcast production as experienced by different staff members (RQ2)?

In this paper, I present preliminary results. They are based on a multi-sited fieldwork amongst Danish news podcast producers. First, I conducted newsroom observation across five different deep dive news podcasts. Then, I interviewed journalists, editors, and sound designers using news podcast manuscripts and audio clips as material probes. By grounding the reflections of practitioners in the experiences of producing specific podcast episodes, I show how news podcast production can be understood as the collaboration and convergence of a multitude of different skills. As news publishers struggle for relevance, my paper goes behind-the-scenes of news podcasting – one of the potential pathways for future journalism. Through fieldwork, I offer an understanding of deep dive news podcast production closely anchored in actual newsroom practices.

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RAS02 Digital Transformations, Podcast Production and the Rise of Synthetic Voices

PP 0826 Radio 3 Extra and the digital transformation of public radio in Spain: A decade of innovation (2013–2023)

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Innovation is considered a hallmark of public radio broadcasters (Kung, 2007; Fernández-Quijada et al., 2015; Martínez-Costa et al., 2020). This characteristic has remained unchanged throughout the transformation process of Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) into Public Service Media (PSM) over recent decades (Direito-Rebollar & Donders, 2021; Nikolaus, 2021; Fieiras-Ceide et al., 2024). In fact, this responsibility has become even more pronounced due to the digitalization of audio, which initially led to the podcasting boom (Spinelli & Dann, 2019) and, subsequently, to the phenomenon of platformization (Sullivan, 2004).

Following the example of the British BBC (Berry, 2020; Charles-Hatt & Sayers, 2021) and the U.S. NPR (Clark & McLean, 2020), in Spain, Radio 3 Extra is the first digital platform based on podcasts and developed from the alternative station Radio 3 (Vivanco-Sánchez, 2021) by Radio Nacional de España (National Radio of Spain), within the framework of

RTVE's public corporation innovation strategies. Its goal is to attract new listeners among digitally native generations (Galán-Arribas et al., 2022; Robert-Agell et al., 2022). A pioneer in creating and distributing digital audio (and video) content, during its first decade, Radio 3 Extra has become a testing ground for this public corporation, developing numerous innovative experiences with 5G and 4K technologies, Dolby Atmos immersive sound, and Artificial Intelligence.

Using a mixed qualitative-quantitative methodology, this study analyzes the production and publishing strategies of Radio 3 Extra. To this end, its entire output during this period (110 exclusive pieces of content) was reviewed using a specific analysis sheet comprising 24 variables. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the main project stakeholders at the station and the corporation: the director, executive producer, editor of the flagship podcast, and Radiotelevisión Española (RTVE) innovation managers between 2013 and 2023.

The findings demonstrate the usefulness of this digital platform for implementing Spanish Radio and Television Corporation's innovation strategy, which not only seeks to adapt to changes in media consumption habits—particularly among younger generations—but also aims to position itself as a significant player in the digital media ecosystem by collaborating with leading private-sector technology companies and producing not only audio content but also transmedia formats. In doing so, it fulfills its legal obligations as a PSM, which include digital innovation.

RAS02 Digital Transformations, Podcast Production and the Rise of Synthetic Voices

PP 0827 Synthetic voices, moral anxieties: How journalism frames AI-generated audio

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NOTE: ChatGPT was used to generate this abstract. The abstract was edited for this submission.

As AI-generated voices and synthetic audio increasingly circulate across journalism, entertainment and everyday communication, concerns about authenticity, trust and surveillance have intensified. While research on artificial intelligence in journalism has largely focused on automation, algorithms and text-based production (Carlson, 2014), comparatively little attention has been paid to how sound- and voice-based AI technologies are discursively constructed in news media. This paper addresses that gap by examining how journalism frames synthetic audio as a site of innovation, threat and moral concern, with particular attention to the cultural politics of voice.

This qualitative interpretive study employs a critical discourse-informed textual analysis, drawing primarily on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993) and informed by Andre Brock's Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA), which emphasizes the inseparability of technology, culture and power in mediated discourse (Brock, 2018). While CTDA has been most often applied to digital platforms and online communities, its attention to how dominant technological narratives encode cultural values and normative assumptions provides a useful extension for analyzing journalistic discourse about emerging audio technologies.

The corpus comprises a purposive sample of news articles published between 2024 and 2025 from a global news outlet, an international wire service and a technology-focused online publication. Articles were selected based on explicit engagement with AI-generated voices, voice cloning or synthetic audio. The corpus is designed to capture dominant discursive patterns within agenda-setting journalism. The analysis attends to lexical choices, metaphors, headline framing and the distribution of agency between human and nonhuman actors, treating news discourse as a social practice through which technological meaning is produced and contested.

Guided by two research questions, the paper examines how news media construct synthetic audio technologies as sites of innovation, threat and ethical concern, and how these constructions reflect broader cultural anxieties about authenticity, voice and technological authority. Preliminary findings suggest that coverage of AI-generated voices oscillates between narratives of progress and unease, often reproducing assumptions of technological inevitability while mobilizing affective language associated with deception and loss of trust. Drawing on CTDA, the analysis highlights how these framings are not culturally neutral but embedded within dominant technocultural logics that privilege corporate expertise and marginalize alternative understandings of voice and agency.

By foregrounding voice as a culturally and politically consequential site of discourse, this paper contributes to radio and sound scholarship by extending critical approaches to AI beyond text and visuals. It demonstrates the value of combining CDA and CTDA to interrogate how journalism mediates and reshapes public understandings of AI and audio.

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RAS02 Digital Transformations, Podcast Production and the Rise of Synthetic Voices

PP 0828 Integration of journalistic podcasts in Spanish digital media: Organization, financing, and partnerships

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After two decades of podcasting, the journalistic podcast stands out as a key format in the current media landscape. Nevertheless, its presence still has a high potential for professional development while representing a novel research area (Martínez-Costa, Amoedo-Casais, Moreno-Moreno, 2022; Whittle, 2024). This work analyzes how Spanish digital media are integrating podcasting into the newsroom, the collaborations and partnerships they establish for production and distribution, and their financing strategies.

This study combines quantitative and qualitative methodologies through three tools. First, we will show data about the presence of podcasts in the Spanish digital media map, updated within the framework of the previous research project *Digital native media in Spain: typologies, audiences, trust construction and keys to journalistic sustainability*-DIGINATIVEMEDIA II 2022–2025, funded by the Government of Spain. Secondly, we have made progress in the content analysis of the production, financing, and distribution of podcasts from a selection of ten digital media outlets with the highest weekly reach among Spanish internet users, according to *Digital News Report Spain 2025*. Finally, the content of a dozen in-depth interviews with executives of digital-native media is coded and analyzed to understand the role they assign to audio content and to assess whether it forms part of their editorial, commercial, and distribution strategies.

This work in progress identifies the incorporation of new professional profiles, the integration of AI tools and the restructuring of newsrooms for the production of podcasts. This study is an extension of previous research carried out by this team and it is also supported by Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain (*Artificial intelligence in digital media in Spain: models and scenarios*-Nextdigimedia 2025–2029).

Likewise, funding remains a challenge. Although advertising is the main way of getting an income, there is a growing interest in branded podcasts, whereas paid subscriptions have not achieved the expected success.

Partnerships and cooperation between media outlets, production companies and platforms are becoming more common. These collaborations seek to enhance the production, distribution, and funding. However, the relationship with major distribution platforms poses challenges in terms of monetization and visibility.

In conclusion, the integration of journalistic podcasts into the strategies of digital media in Spain is a dynamic process that presents challenges and opportunities. Adapting to new audience demands, seeking sustainable funding models, and engaging with distribution platforms are some of the key aspects of the scenario studied in this research.

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RAS02 Digital Transformations, Podcast Production and the Rise of Synthetic Voices

PP 0829 Voice and persuasion: From human vocality to artificial speech

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The human voice has always been a persuasive instrument (In the beginning was the Word, John I: I), an embodied medium capable of conveying trust, emotion, and authority. Across history, vocal expression has functioned as a privileged channel for social bonding, leadership, and collective sense-making, precisely because is an element of bodily physicality and it carries traces of the body behiind: breath, hesitation, rhythm, and vulnerability. Yet, in the age of generative artificial intelligence, vocality itself is being reprogrammed. This paper examines the transition from human to AI-generated voices as a paradigm shift in the ecology of persuasion, where speech becomes a computational interface rather than a primarily human faculty. The study situates this transformation within the theoretical framework of *post-orality* (Caroleo, 2025), a stage in which algorithmic systems simulate human affect, rhythm, and prosody to influence perception decision-making, and behaviour at scale.

Drawing on insights from *persuasive technology* (Fogg, 2003), *computers as social actors* (Reeves & Nass, 1996), and the emerging field of *affective computing* (Picard, 1997), the research explores how synthetic voices are intentionally designed to evoke credibility, empathy, and compliance. This systems do not merely transmit onformation, they perform sociality. Through a mixed-method approach that integrates a questionnaire, a total of 20 in depth semi-structured interviews and critical algorithm studies, the paper compares persuasive affordances in human and AI-mediated vocal interactions across digital assistants, conversational agents, Ai Podcast and voice-based social media.

Findings indicate a profound shift from relational persuasion, rooted in authenticity and shared embodiment (Sundar & Nass, 2000), to data-driven modulation, where persuasion operates through predictive analytics and emotional mimicry (Bryson, 2019; Gunkel, 2020). This transformation raising ethical questions around authorship, manipulation, and the moral status of synthetic speech.

Ultimately, the paper argues that the migration of persuasion from human to artificial voices marks a decisive turn in human–AI communication—one where the voice ceases to be merely human, becoming a programmable medium of influence.

Keywords

voice; persuasion; artificial intelligence; post-orality; affective computing; vocal sovereignty; human–AI interaction

RCC01 Challenges in Warning Communication: Gaps, Barriers, and Ways Forward

PN 05 Between analog radios and AI assistants: Rethinking multi-channel warning after the Czech 2024 floods

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The September 2024 Czech floods offered a case in which timely meteorological warnings were matched by a decisive government response, translating early forecasts into a sustained risk communication effort at the national level. Subsequent conversations with municipal leaders, however, revealed counterintuitive insights worth examining. Intensive media coverage sometimes led local authorities to reduce their own communication efforts, assuming citizens "already know." Traditional channels such as local radio, personal outreach, and neighbor-to-neighbor networks retain significant potential that remains underutilized alongside dominant digital approaches. Perhaps most notably, the very concept of "communication" lacks shared understanding: local leaders tend to perceive it as infrastructure and information exchange within the crisis management system, rather than as effective dialogue with all segments of the public. Drawing on direct operational experience and supplementary qualitative conversations with mayors in affected regions, this contribution examines the multi-channel imperative from a practitioner's perspective. The core argument is straightforward: adequate early warning cannot rely on any single channel, however sophisticated. Warnings must reach citizens through multiple, redundant pathways, across diverse population groups, narrative frameworks, and varying levels of institutional trust. Crucially, this requires moving beyond message-centric thinking toward human-centered design that places individual information needs, uncertainties, and decision-making contexts at the center of warning system architecture. Yet the full potential of existing multi-channel approaches remains unrealized. Traditional tools and communication pathways are underutilized; the infrastructure for truly redundant, inclusive reach is incomplete; the conceptual shift toward public dialogue is far from complete. And already, before these foundations are solid, new information practices are emerging. AI-powered assistants are rapidly becoming embedded in everyday information-seeking practices. While not yet significant actors in crisis communication specifically, their trajectory suggests they will increasingly mediate how citizens seek and interpret emergency information. New use cases and roles are to be expected, ones we cannot yet precisely name or define. This presents both challenge and opportunity. The challenge lies not only in alignment, ensuring that AI-generated guidance supports rather than contradicts official warning protocols, but also in coherently integrating these new actors into multi-channel redundancy frameworks. Preparedness campaigns recommend battery-powered analog radios; simultaneously, we anticipate AI assistants serving as trusted guides before, during, and after crisis situations. Both belong in the same ecosystem. The opportunity is anticipatory: we can begin now to shape how these technologies integrate with, rather than fragment, warning systems. Practitioner insights from real crisis situations, gathered through qualitative fieldwork and public opinion research, offer empirically grounded knowledge that could inform the ongoing development of language models, strengthening their capacity to serve crisis communication.

RCC01 Challenges in Warning Communication: Gaps, Barriers, and Ways Forward

PN 06 Challenges and pathways to effective warning systems for extreme weather events: Global insights for the European context

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Disaster risk communication represents a critical but insufficiently examined domain that seeks to bridge the persistent gap between predictive science regarding weather forecasting as well as behavioral and societal response. This systematic literature review seeks to address this gap by offering an integrated synthesis of research on disaster warning communication. Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the study employs a transparent and replicable review process that combines automated search-term identification with thematic analysis grounded in qualitative rigor. Through consolidating fragmented insights across disciplines, we aim to identify recurring challenges in effective warning communication, as well as to understand the underlying factors and innovative solutions. Leveraging the expertise of a network of European scholars and practitioners, this review (N = 173) aims to highlight the relevance of these findings for the European context, contributing actionable knowledge for policymakers and practitioners seeking to develop effective warning systems. Furthermore, the analysis directly supports ongoing efforts to enhance multi-hazard early warning systems by translating scientific precision into human-centered understanding. To guide this synthesis, the review is organized around the following research questions: RQ1: What key challenges are identified in the literature regarding disaster risk and early warning communication? RQ2: What underlying factors contribute to these challenges, including technological, institutional, and social dimensions? RQ3: What solutions, innovations, or best practices have been proposed or tested to improve impact-based communication and enhance societal resilience? The findings show that while extreme weather events like floods, droughts, and heatwaves dominated the empirical focus, the review identified cross-cutting challenges including fragmented governance, underdeveloped institutional coordination, and insufficient attention to vulnerable populations such as the elderly, low-income groups, and non-native speakers. Although the advances in impact-based forecasting are frequently addressed in prior research, the communication and use of warnings remain constrained by for example, political reluctance and digital

exclusion, as well as a lack of trust in institutions among citizens. The findings thus highlight that the effectiveness of early warning systems depends not only on technological capacity and interorganizational cooperation, but also on their social embedding and communicative legitimacy. It points to the importance of translating scientific information into human-centered understanding, in order to enhance multi-hazard early warning systems.

RCC01 Challenges in Warning Communication: Gaps, Barriers, and Ways Forward

PN 07 When warnings must work: Designing official weather warnings at the Deutscher Wetterdienst (German Meteorological Service)

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Warnings are a specific form of public communication: they are time-critical, normatively charged, and explicitly aimed at triggering action. Yet, in many warning systems, communication design has traditionally received less attention than technical and scientific accuracy. This presentation examines how warning messages can be conceptualized and empirically evaluated as communicative acts, drawing on recent empirical studies conducted at the Deutscher Wetterdienst (DWD) between 2024 and 2026, in the context of ongoing explorations of impact-oriented warning communication. Using a series of empirical studies, the presentation investigates how different elements of weather warnings are perceived, processed, and assessed by recipients, including warning levels and labels, textual structure, impact descriptions, and recommended actions. The empirical basis combines population-representative surveys, experimental designs, and co-design approaches, drawing on research associated with the RainBoW program (Risk-based, Application-oriented and INdividualizaBle Provision of Optimized Warning Information; Leschzyk et al., 2025) and the WEXICOM research framework. The empirical results reveal several recurring patterns in how warning messages are received and evaluated. First, labels, colors, and categorical elements alone are not consistently sufficient to convey urgency. Second, variations in the internal structure of warning texts are associated with differences in comprehension and recall. In particular, the ordering of information, the number of listed impacts or recommended actions, and the relative prominence of hazard descriptions and guidance are reflected in what respondents report remembering. Third, stated preferences for specific warning elements often diverge from results of recall and comprehension tasks, indicating that different evaluation approaches capture distinct aspects of message reception. Building on these findings, the presentation reflects on implications for the design and assessment of public weather warnings, with a focus on the interplay of language, structure, content, and visual elements. Rather than relying solely on preference-based feedback, it highlights the importance of considering warning messages as coherent communicative arrangements under conditions of uncertainty. Warnings are approached as communicative interventions whose effectiveness depends on the alignment of linguistic clarity, impact-related contextualization, and actionable guidance. Particular attention is paid to impact-related information—such as return periods of events of comparable intensity or references to everyday consequences—as a communicative resource that links meteorological data to socially meaningful contexts (Schulze & Voss, 2023).In Germany, the Deutscher Wetterdienst is the sole institution authorized to issue official weather warnings. This mandate places particular emphasis on the quality of warning communication, as these messages serve as the authoritative reference for the public, media, and emergency management. The presentation situates empirical communication research as an integral part of this role and as a basis for the ongoing development and harmonization of official warning communication at the DWD (Erhardt et al., 2025).

RCC01 Challenges in Warning Communication: Gaps, Barriers, and Ways Forward

PN 08 Unveiling local barriers to effective warning communication: Evidence from the AlertHub network

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This presentation discusses preliminary findings from a multi-country qualitative research project conducted within the COST Action AlertHub, involving scholars and practitioners from more than ten European countries. The research aims to uncover the challenges that local authorities and experts face in ensuring effective warning communication. While national disaster response and communication policies provide overarching frameworks, it is local-level institutions that must interpret these directives, adapt them to specific community contexts, and maintain direct communication with the population. Through semi-structured interviews with practitioners working in local disaster management, risk prevention, and emergency communication, the study examines how national policies are translated into practice and where significant barriers arise—representing one of the first coordinated efforts to analyse local-level warning communication across such a broad

range of European contexts. The analysis is anchored in warning communication research and complemented by theories of multi-level governance and policy translation. Together, these perspectives highlight how local authorities operate as frontline communicators who must interpret national directives, contextualize risk information, tailor messages for diverse populations, and sustain public trust under varying institutional and resource constraints. To examine these communicative processes in depth, the IDEA model (Internalization–Distribution–Explanation–Action) is employed as an analytical lens for assessing how local actors construct, deliver, and justify warning messages. Preliminary findings reveal recurrent challenges across more than ten participating countries, including tensions between national requirements and local realities, difficulties in tailoring warnings to heterogeneous communities, limited resources, unclear governance responsibilities, and the growing complexity introduced by digital and social media environments. Participants emphasized that effective warning communication depends not only on technological systems but also on local knowledge, coordination capacities, and meaningful engagement with communities. By highlighting these ground-level challenges across multiple European contexts, the study offers empirically grounded insights into the gaps and barriers that shape warning effectiveness.

RCC02 Leading Through Uncertainty: Crisis Communication in Communities, Organisations, and Digital Spaces

PP 0190 Authentic vulnerability and leadership communication in crises: A matrix for understanding emotion and credibility

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Crises place organizational leaders under heightened public scrutiny, requiring them to communicate not only decisions and actions but also emotion under conditions of uncertainty and responsibility attribution. Research in risk and crisis communication has shown that leaders' emotional expressions can shape stakeholder reactions, particularly perceptions of empathy, sincerity, and trust (e.g. Claeys et al., 2022; Stephens et al., 2019). At the same time, findings remain inconsistent: similar emotional displays may enhance credibility in some crises while appearing exaggerated, self-centred, or manipulative in others. Existing frameworks, including responsibility-based approaches such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007), offer limited explanation for these divergent outcomes when emotion and leadership identity are foregrounded.

This paper advances the concept of *authentic vulnerability* to address this gap. Authentic vulnerability refers to leadership communication that combines emotional openness with consistency in identity and visible acceptance of responsibility. To conceptualise how vulnerability and authenticity intersect, the paper proposes an *authenticity-vulnerability matrix* structured along two dimensions: the degree of emotional exposure and the degree of perceived authenticity. The framework distinguishes four leadership communication styles in crises: controlled messaging, performative vulnerability, grounded transparency, and authentic vulnerability. Rather than treating emotion as inherently beneficial or harmful, the matrix conceptualises vulnerability as communicative exposure to accountability and risk, and authenticity as a relational judgment inferred by publics rather than an intrinsic leadership trait.

The framework is illustrated through a set of ten leader-centred crisis cases spanning different organisational scales and cultural contexts, including multinational corporations, scale-ups, and owner-led organisations. The cases focus on situations in which senior leaders were directly implicated in both the crisis and the response, such as industrial accidents, technological failures, cultural backlash, workplace controversies, and aviation disasters. Comparative analysis shows that emotional expression alone does not constitute vulnerability, nor does it guarantee perceptions of credibility. Leaders were perceived as vulnerable when they publicly accepted responsibility, acknowledged limits to control, or incurred consequences extending beyond symbolic apology. Credibility emerged when such exposure aligned with prior leadership identity and was sustained over time, although evaluations often diverged across competing publics.

By distinguishing emotional expression from vulnerability and treating credibility as an audience-based judgment, the authenticity-vulnerability matrix extends emotion-centred crisis communication research and complements responsibility-focused models. The paper contributes a diagnostic lens for analysing leadership communication in fragmented and polarised public environments, where crisis effectiveness cannot be assessed solely through reputational repair, but must account for uneven trust and contested evaluations.

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RCC02 Leading Through Uncertainty: Crisis Communication in Communities, Organisations, and Digital Spaces

PP 0191 To conduct crisis communication during rumors

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To conduct crisis communication during rumors

Rumors have the ability to establish and become a topic of conversation that reaches far and wide and causes responsible politicians and authorities to change their focus. The phenomenon is nothing new, it has existed as long as people have talked to eath others. When dangers and uncertainties exist, rumors pop up in several different places at the same time. They arise from our conversations and interactions online. In the event of emergencies and crises, they also attract attention, which sometimes makes the intended crisis communication more difficult to handle. In a number of different crisis situations, politicians and authorities have commented on rumors and urged citizens not to spread them, which has had the opposite effect. Rumors also circulate in digital media platforms and have received competition from the news outlet. Rumors are still faster and take the attention as the media searches for reliable sources to break the news. In this presentation, some examples from different crises situations will be exposed how decision makers and agencies handle rumors.

Waiting for action creates prime conditions for rumors to arise, a lesson that all organizations must learn. The most crucial factor for crisis communication is to convey information rapidly. Moreover, the information that is provided must be correct. These two important perspectives are not opposed to each other. Speed is about conveying that the emergency or crisis is being taken seriously and that all available resources have been deployed to help those affected.

In this presentation, some practical examples will be presented and described. It will also explain how rumors can be perceived by politicians and authorities.

Biography

Henrik Olinder, Senior Expert Crisis Communication and Editor at the Swedish Civil Defence and Resilience Agency. He implements Crisis Communication training and advising government agencies in crisis. He is responsible for editing research reports, methodology and funding of research. In Mars 2024, he received the Bridge Award for Excellence in Professional Practice from the International Crisis and Risk Communication Association.

RCC02 Leading Through Uncertainty: Crisis Communication in Communities, Organisations, and Digital Spaces

PP 0192 Rumour narratives as collective sensemaking during the first two years of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine

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This paper explores salient rumour narratives circulating in Ukraine during 2022–2023 and examines how these narratives function as mechanisms of collective sensemaking under conditions of extreme uncertainty. The paper conceptualises rumours as recurring narrative storylines through which social actors collectively interpret threat, responsibility, and possible futures in a prolonged wartime context.

The paper is theoretically grounded in sensemaking theory (Weick et al., 2005) and classical and contemporary theories of rumours (Allport & Postman, 1947; Shibutani, 1966; DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007), which conceptualise rumours as socially embedded communicative practices emerging in situations of high ambiguity and significance. It is additionally informed by research on crisis communication emphasising processual and prolonged dynamics (Coombs, 2007), which provides a framework for understanding how communicative patterns evolve when such conditions persist over time rather than unfold as singular events.

Empirically, the paper draws on two complementary qualitative datasets. The first consists of a time-bound corpus of rumours documented during 2022 and 2023 through monitoring of Ukrainian and Russian Telegram channels, Ukrainian online media, and materials collected by media literacy and fact-checking organisations. These materials enable a qualitative comparison between different phases of the war. The second dataset comprises retrospective rumour accounts collected through a large-scale survey (n>2,000), in which respondents described rumours they encountered. These accounts are treated as memory-based narratives reflecting mediated salience and emotional persistence rather than real-time circulation (Hoskins, 2009; 2018).

Methodologically, the paper adopts a narrative-oriented approach to thematic analysis (Daiute, 2013; Neuendorf, 2018). The analysis focuses on identifying recurring narrative patterns and examining their internal structure, including key actors,

causal logic, attribution of responsibility, moral framing, and temporal expectations. A qualitative comparison between 2022 and 2023 is used to explore how dominant rumour narratives shift as the war moves from a dynamic phase to an attrition phase (Horbyk, 2025). Survey-based data are analysed to consider which narratives remain salient in collective memory and how they are retrospectively framed.

By focusing on rumour narratives as communicative practices, the paper contributes to discussions on rumours, crisis communication, and collective sensemaking in contexts of sustained uncertainty.

RCC02 Leading Through Uncertainty: Crisis Communication in Communities, Organisations, and Digital Spaces

PP 0193 Polarized discourse: The role of agents in the polarization of public opinion on social media in times of moral crisis.

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Abortion law constitutes a moral issue that has long polarized public opinion and offers limited potential for compromise between opposing positions. As a moral question, it is associated with strong emotions, identity-based attachments, and social conflict. In recent decades, social media have become one of the most visible and influential communication environments in which such moral conflicts are articulated, intensified, and contested, particularly in situations perceived as crises.

This project examines how agents — understood, following Bruno Latour, as actors with the capacity to influence the formation, stabilization, and change of public opinion — use social media in situations of moral crisis and if (how) their communication influences the polarization of public discourse. It focuses on cases in which changes in abortion law trigger public anxiety, social unrest, and heightened media attention.

The doctoral project addresses three interrelated research problems. First, it examines how agents with the potential to influence public opinion communicate on social media in debates related to situations of moral crisis. Second, it seeks to identify and characterize patterns of communication that are associated with polarized public discourse and to examine whether these patterns display features identified in communication in other crisis situations. Third, it explores how users respond to the communication of agents in social media environments.

The empirical focus of the project will initially be on three widely discussed cases of abortion law change: the tightening of abortion regulations in Poland (2016–2021), the decriminalization of abortion in Mexico (2021), and the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in Ireland (2018). These cases are treated as situations of moral crisis in which abortion becomes a focal point of moral disagreement, social conflict, and identity-based polarization. The comparative perspective makes it possible to examine both similarities and differences in how agents communicate across different social and cultural contexts.

This initial selection of cases serves as a starting point for a broader comparative analysis, allowing the project to remain open to further empirical expansion as the research develops. By focusing on moral crisis rather than on political competition, the project seeks to contribute to research on risk and crisis communication by examining how social media function as arenas in which moral risks, social anxieties, and polarized identities are publicly negotiated.

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RCC03 Strategic Communication Across Wartime Fronts: Media, Technology, Security, and Society

PP 0310 Too much support for Ukraine, or dissatisfaction with anti-Russia policies? Explaining Euroscepticism in Romania in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine has reshaped public debate across Europe, generating heightened uncertainty, perceived risk, and prolonged societal disruption. While existing research shows that overall support for the European Union has increased since the outbreak of the war, far less is known about how crisis policies influence Euroscepticism in Member States that are highly pro-European. The current article addresses this gap by examining Romania, a country on the Union's eastern border, characterized by strong support for the EU and NATO, in a context of chronic distrust in domestic institutions, and amid the

rise of a heightened Eurosceptic discourse by part of the political elite. From a risk and crisis communication perspective, the study investigates how public evaluations of the EU's crisis responses, both against Russia and in support of Ukraine, reshape trust, legitimacy, and solidarity under conditions of geopolitical threat. We focus on four highly salient policy domains: EU sanctions against Russia, efforts to reduce energy dependence on Russia, support for Ukrainian refugees, and EU involvement in Ukraine's post-war reconstruction. The article relies on original public opinion data collected in Romania between October and December 2022 (N = 5,709). Logistic regression models are then used to assess how attitudes towards EU crisis policies can predict Euroscepticism. Results show that dissatisfaction with EU assistance to Ukrainian refugees and EU's intention of involvement in Ukrainian reconstruction are the strongest predictors of Euroscepticism. The effects also remain robust when all dimensions are included simultaneously, indicating that Euroscepticism is shaped by the cumulative perception of economic, humanitarian, and security-related burdens associated with EU crisis governance. The findings suggest that Euroscepticism in Romania is best understood as crisis-driven and instrumental. While overall support for the EU remains remarkably high, it becomes conditional when EU actions are communicated and perceived as imposing disproportionate costs during a prolonged crisis. Rather than reflecting ideological rejection of European integration, Euroscepticism in Romania emerges from evaluations of crisis management, fairness, and responsibility. By focusing on a highly Euro-enthusiastic society exposed to acute geopolitical risk, this study contributes to risk and crisis communication research by showing how prolonged crises can reconfigure public trust and legitimacy toward supranational governance. The article underscores the importance of crisis communication strategies that address perceptions of risk, burden-sharing, and solidarity in order to sustain public support during extended geopolitical emergencies.

RCC03 Strategic Communication Across Wartime Fronts: Media, Technology, Security, and Society

PP 0311 When crisis communication meets forensics: Managing narratives in ransomware, third party, and nation state attacks

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Within crisis communication, research has traditionally examined how organizations explain, justify, and frame crises once responsibility has been established and operational control has been restored. In the context of cyber incidents, this focus has translated primarily into studies of post incident communication with customers and clients following data breaches. While this is an important dimension of crisis communication, the presentation proposed here is based on a study that shows, according to practitioners, that much more is taking place behind the scenes in which the communication function plays a critical role.

In cyber related crises, communication often takes place while investigations, negotiations, and attribution processes are still ongoing. This study argues that such conditions fundamentally challenge dominant crisis communication frameworks, which largely assume that communication follows rather than shapes crisis response. Drawing on semi structured interviews with eleven cyber crisis practitioners, this presentation reports on an ongoing study and provides an in depth analysis of how communication operates during active cyber incidents.

The findings show that crisis communication in cyber incidents frequently becomes operational. Following principles of digital forensics (Casey, 2019), communication must not compromise evidence preservation or investigative integrity. Communication choices can influence ransomware negotiations, alter pressure dynamics in third party compromises, and shape diplomatic or commercial relations in cases involving suspected nation state espionage. As a result, communication is not merely a reputational activity but is tightly intertwined with forensic investigations, operational security, and strategic decision making.

In ransomware cases, organizations must carefully balance transparency with the risk of disrupting negotiations, as threat actors actively monitor both internal and external communication. In third party incidents, public statements by partners can unintentionally escalate the crisis by increasing external pressure, requiring intensive coordination to manage communicative spillover. In espionage related incidents, the immediate consequences may be less visible to stakeholders, yet communication can become embedded in broader geopolitical narratives with implications extending beyond the affected organization.

These findings challenge the assumptions underlying dominant crisis communication models such as Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT; Coombs, 2007) and Image Repair Theory (Benoit, 1997), which were not developed for contexts characterized by prolonged uncertainty, contested attribution, and ongoing operational response. By demonstrating how communication can actively shape developments within a crisis, this study contributes to crisis communication scholarship by broadening its analytical focus from post crisis messaging about data breaches to internal and external communication while being under investigation and negotiation.

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RCC03 Strategic Communication Across Wartime Fronts: Media, Technology, Security, and Society

PP 0312 Framing war at the border: Finnish newspapers on the Russo-Ukrainian war

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 constituted a watershed moment in European security politics and profoundly reshaped political, media, and public discourses across the West. In Finland – a small state with a 1,300-kilometre border with Russia and a long tradition of military non-alignment – the war was widely interpreted as a direct signal of heightened Russian assertiveness and a fundamental challenge to national security. The invasion coincided with a rapid transformation of elite and public opinion, culminating in Finland's historic decision to join NATO. Against this, this article examines how Finnish mainstream news media framed the Russo-Ukrainian War in their editorial coverage.

The study builds on the war/peace journalism framework originally developed by Johan Galtung and later operationalized by Maslog and colleagues. Rather than adopting the framework normatively, the article employs it as an analytical tool to examine how different framing orientations manifest empirically in media texts. Using a quantitative content analysis, the study analyzes editorial texts published between February 2022 and July 2025 in six Finnish newspapers. The sample includes national tabloid newspapers, national quality newspapers, and regional quality newspapers published in both Finnish and Swedish, enabling systematic comparisons across media type, organizational level, language, and time.

The analysis assesses the relative prevalence of war journalism and peace journalism indicators in editorial framing and tests a set of hypotheses concerning overall dominance, temporal dynamics, and variation across different segments of the Finnish press. Particular attention is paid to whether war-oriented framing declines over time as the conflict becomes protracted, and to whether tabloid, national, and regional outlets differ in their reliance on elite-driven, victory-oriented, and emotive frames. By focusing on editorials – texts that explicitly articulate normative and interpretative positions – the study offers insights into how media in a bordering small state construct meaning around war, responsibility, and security under conditions of geopolitical crisis. More broadly, the article contributes to research on media performance in wartime, the dynamics of elite consensus in small-state media systems, and the empirical applicability of the war/peace journalism framework in the context of a prolonged interstate war in Europe.

RCC04 Disaster Risk Communication: Capacity, Accessibility, Trust, and Resilience

PP 0639 Reducing communication-related vulnerability to disasters: A framework for capacity development

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Social vulnerability to disasters is often exacerbated by failures or shortcomings in risk and crisis communication. The framework of 'communication-related vulnerability to disasters' (Hansson et al., 2020) suggests that people may become more vulnerable if they encounter problems with accessing, understanding, or acting upon information about hazards. Communication researchers, policy makers, and emergency responders need to devise concrete plans for reducing these obstacles and for building communication capacity as a part of broader systemic disaster preparedness capacity development.

Efforts to strengthen disaster risk communication capacities tend to rely on generalized principles, operational standards, or compilations of 'best practices', typically derived from scholarly analyses of practitioners' reflections on previous disaster responses (Seeger & Schwarz, 2024). This approach is known in disaster studies as the 'all-hazards' approach as it is based on an assumption that different disasters share common features and can thus be addressed by uniform preparedness strategies. However, recent research suggests that this approach to disaster planning does not support the consideration of the unique features of each hazard scenario (Bodas et al., 2020; Peleg et al., 2021).

In this paper, we address this shortcoming by outlining a scenario-based framework for the development of communication capacity of disaster management institutions. Drawing on recent theorisations of the dynamics of disaster vulnerability (Orru et al., 2023), the framework combines audience research and engagement and scenario-based vulnerability analysis exercises to provide input to evidence-based changes in organisational practices that reinforce preparedness and communication capabilities. The identified development tasks help to address the needs of people in vulnerable situations, take into account situational complications that may emerge in a particular disaster scenario, and guide the filling of capacity gaps in disaster management, communication, and social support structures.

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RCC04 Disaster Risk Communication: Capacity, Accessibility, Trust, and Resilience

PP 0640 How data accessibility amplifies knowledge gap in civil protection: Mapping warning communication documentation across 27 countries

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In cross-national research a persistent challenge emerges: the uneven accessibility and availability of official documentation. While research consortiums might use unified research protocols across countries, the outputs stumble upon the strict barriers of research validity and reliability: in some cases, relevant documents are easily accessible and publicly available, in others they are restricted, fragmented, or scattered across institutions, and in some contexts they may not exist at all. This creates both practical barriers for researchers and deeper questions about social science research replication and transparency. This discrepancy doesn't just complicate comparative research; it exposes a deeper knowledge accessibility problem in civil protection, where documentation also indicates how institutions mitigate people's vulnerabilities – scarce documentation refers to a stronger reliance on individual experience and memory but more flexibility for *ad hoc* solutions, whereas extensive regulating reflects a stronger dependence on institutional memory and collective experience, often at the cost of reduced flexibility in countering unforeseen threats in risk and crisis communication.

We built an agent-based search algorithm to map documents related to warning communication in 27 countries. To that end we created a research protocol in English and translated the questions into local languages. For the agentic search we used local VPN servers to mirror possible local accessibility issues and restrictions in each country separately. We then compared our agent-based search results with results from an international consortium of researchers (AlertHub) who carried out the same search manually and independently. By examining 27 countries, our study highlights how uneven access to warning communication documents reflects broader gaps in institutional transparency, knowledge production, and preparedness. We argue that these disparities are not just methodological obstacles but valuable signals pointing to where civil protection systems need to develop, harmonize, or strengthen documentation practices.

Keywords

warning communication, data accessibility, knowledge gap, capability gap, cross-national research, methodological paper

RCC04 Disaster Risk Communication: Capacity, Accessibility, Trust, and Resilience

PP 0641 Communicating risk on the margins: Disaster experience, citizens' trust, and public communication paths in insular territories

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The increasing frequency of natural disasters, amplified by climate change, have made risk communication a crucial dimension of contemporary society for understanding persistent and emerging global challenges (Schwarz et al. 2025). The impacts of climate change are increasingly visible and are significantly shaping how institutions communicate with citizens and media (Eurobarometer 2025).

Citizens' responses to natural hazards are closely linked to how risk and crisis communication are managed by public organizations, such as regions and municipalities, whose legitimacy largely depends on institutional trust. Public communication (OECD 2021) plays a key role in transparently informing and engaging citizens during uncertain and critical events. In an era characterized by mega-crises (Sellnow-Richmond & Lukakovic 2025) and the proliferation of digital platforms, the challenge extends beyond information delivery to nurture intangible assets like trust (Canel & Luoma-aho 2019). When risks escalate into disasters, communicative effectiveness depends on institutions' capacity to maintain a dialogue with media and citizens to foster engagement and resilience (Lovari & Pisu 2025).

This abstract presents the activities of a research project funded by the Italian Ministry of University, aimed at supporting more participatory and inclusive risk communication policies through a survey on citizens' risk perception and

communication practices (Ivčević et al. 2021). The study focuses on Italy's major islands, Sicily and Sardinia, where insularity represents a key factor shaping vulnerability and communicative resilience. It adopted a probabilistic, multi-stage stratified sampling design based on territorial distribution, degree of urbanization, age, and gender. Data were collected in 2025 using a mixed-mode approach combining CAWI and CATI. Overall, 3,022 interviews were completed: 1,356 in Sicily, 443 in Sardinia, and 1,223 in a national comparison sample.

The findings show that direct experience of natural disasters is strongly shaped by territorial context. At national level, respondents mainly report experience with events like thunderstorms, lightning and hail (80.8%), heat and cold waves (74.4%). In insular contexts, direct experience highlights more specific risk patterns. Sardinians report high experience with drought (66.8%) and wildfires (57.8%). Sicilians highlight direct experience with earthquakes (55.6%) and volcanic eruptions (43.6%).

In terms of trust, family and friends emerge as the primary reference points for coping with disasters, especially in Sardinia (86.5%). This reliance on informal networks is consistent with a stronger sense of cohesion in insular contexts: respondents in Sardinia (27.1%) and Sicily (28.8%) believe that citizens must largely cope on their own, compared to 14.6% at the national level. Institutional trust is highest for emergency actors (Fire Brigades, Civil Protection), while trust in regional, national, and European institutions is comparatively lower.

Regarding information sources, emergency services are considered the most reliable channels across all phases of emergencies (58% nationally), followed by traditional media like television, radio, and newspapers (38–42%). Local and regional media play a more prominent role in Sardinia (42%), while trust in social media remains limited (10–13%).

Findings identify specific paths to integrate citizens' voices in the management of public risk communication strategies by improving its clarity, timeliness, and territorial reach, particularly in insular settings marginally investigated in risk communication (Diers-Lawson & Meißner 2021).

RCC04 Disaster Risk Communication: Capacity, Accessibility, Trust, and Resilience

PP 0642 Crisis, social media and citizen publics: The case of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in Türkiye

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Natural disasters trigger both physical and communicative responses in individuals. During crises, like earthquakes, these responses become publicly visible through mass media and social media platforms, paving the way for the formation of active publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Disaster communication research shows that information seeking, help requests, and emotional expression intensify, while media plays a key role in shaping these dynamics (Major, 1998; Goltz & Bourque, 2017).

This study, supported by the Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Council, examines citizens' communicative practices on social media during earthquakes. While prior research focused on the use of social media by institutional actors, the communicative approaches adopted by citizens during crises have been addressed to a limited extent. Existing studies nevertheless indicate that communication differs between directly and indirectly affected individuals and that user-generated content mainly centers on help, information, and solidarity (Miyabe et al., 2012; Malasig & Quinto, 2016; Ağralı et al., 2022).

This study employs a mixed-method approach combining corpus-based and quantitative content analysis to examine citizens' communicative practices on X (formerly Twitter) during the earthquakes. The dataset includes 186,439 tweets posted between 6–13 February 2023, limited to tweets with at least 50 retweets, generating over 500M interactions. Twitter was monitored at 30-minute intervals, during which all hashtags appearing in the top ten trending topics were recorded. In total, 4,586 distinct hashtags and 6,578 distinct mentions were collected, capturing the breadth and dynamics of earthquake-related discourse. The corpus was tokenized using TSTokenizer, a social media–aware tool that preserves hashtags, mentions, emojis, and URLs as independent tokens; then an annotated corpus was built.

The findings show that X operated as both a news source and a distributed platform for crisis communication and coordination. Network and hashtag analyses indicate that civil society actors and celebrities often generated more interaction than official institutions, while citizens framed the crisis around urgency, help, and responsibility. Comparisons between verified and unverified accounts further reveal that institutional actors use more limited, framing language, whereas ordinary citizens adopt a more pluralistic, demanding, and normative repertoire.

The study shows that the citizen discourse that emerges on social media reveals an active public in which public sensitivity appears during crises, while also fulfilling functions of accountability and coordination.

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RCC04 Disaster Risk Communication: Capacity, Accessibility, Trust, and Resilience

PP 0643 Lessons learned from a communications blackout in the United States of America: The critical role of radio broadcasters and amateur (ham) radio operators during Hurricane Helene

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The second-deadliest storm in the United States of America's history, Hurricane Helene wreaked havoc on communities across the Southeast in September 2024. In addition to the massive physical devastation, crisis responders faced a daunting communication challenge: No power, no phones, no internet, no cell service, and no reverse 911 emergency messaging. It was a communications blackout. Such severe damage to the communications infrastructure had not occurred in the U.S.A. More than 1,700 miles of fiber-optic cable was destroyed, including all three fiber-optic communication trunk lines in Western North Carolina. There were 1,034 cell sites down, 1,100 land and rockslides, and more than 1,500 roads and bridges damaged or destroyed. Communities were suddenly isolated, both physically and technologically. Crisis communication plans built on websites, social media, reverse 911 phone calls, and mobile messaging were rendered insufficient. In the absence of these channels, radio and amateur (ham) radio filled the information void. This presentation will highlight how radio broadcasters and amateur (ham) radio operators helped people navigate washed out roads and bridges, find gasoline, food, water, shelter, etc. and connect people in need with emergency responders. Utilizing the case study method and interviews, this presentation will showcase the response of three entities: 1) a university radio station serving a rural mountainous area that continued broadcasting even though the university was closed, 2) an assemblage of eight, iHeartRadio stations serving the metropolitan area most devastated by the storm that were connected via a Starlink satellite the day after the storm, and 3) an amateur (ham) radio society that provided critical connectivity for emergency responders and radio broadcasters. Drawing on insights from the case studies, as well as interviews from state and county emergency managers and crisis communicators, we will share lessons learned and recommendations for how organizations can prepare for crises when terrestrial-based channels fail in the future. Twelve recommendations across three categories will be offered: 1) The need for robust contingency planning, e.g., utilizing the U.S. Army's PACE communication planning approach; 2) Enhancing pre-crisis infrastructure, e.g., procuring satellite uplinks and phones; 3) Developing pre-crisis relationships, e.g., identifying and connecting with American Radio Relay League or International Amateur Radio Union groups. Finally, we will discuss the emotional toll broadcasters and crisis communicators experienced as they tried to save people's lives and re-connect them with their loved ones. Some broadcasters shared they still have those calls "ringing in their heads." For example, one broadcaster received a call from a man on the roof of his home with his family and wondered what they should do. The broadcaster later learned the family was swept away in the flood waters and didn't survive. An emergency manager in one of the hardest hit areas said the communications blackout was "terrifying," and that the mental health providers who took the time to talk to him in the weeks following the storm were "a Godsend." We conclude that providing mental health support to responders and communicators during crises should be prioritized and is a ripe area for future research.

RCC05 Trust Under Pressure: Crisis Communication, Misinformation, and Moral Credibility

PP 0743 Logical persuasion or social belonging? A survey experiment on the effectiveness of social nudges versus classical pre-bunking on belief in misinformation

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Recent crises have highlighted the rapid spread of misinformation, prompting the development of interventions aimed at strengthening citizens' resilience, among which pre-bunking has become a prominent approach (Loomba et al., 2021; Erlich & Garner, 2023). Rooted in inoculation theory, pre-bunking assumes that prior exposure to weakened forms of misinformation can reduce later susceptibility (Traberg et al., 2022). While classical pre-bunking relies on warnings or corrections before exposure (Lewandowsky & van der Linden, 2021), more recent approaches have emphasized nudges, which operate through psychological reminders rather than logical persuasion (Andi & Åkesson, 2021).

Social norm nudges, in particular, highlight what is socially desirable or commonly practiced and may be especially effective because they leverage existing group identities (Andi & Åkesson, 2021; Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Specifically, they may

strengthen adherence to group norms by highlighting the alignment between individual behavior and group values (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). When specific group identities are made salient, it may be the case that social norm nudges outperform classical pre-bunking, particularly among individuals who strongly identify with that group (ibid). Conversely, they may be less effective than classical pre-bunking when appeals target broader, majority-based, descriptive norms.

Despite novel research showing the potential of social norm nudges, no study has systematically compared them with classical pre-bunking. Consequently, we do not know whether the above reasoning holds true, how effective social norm nudges are compared to classical pre-bunking, or under which conditions social norm nudging has the strongest impact.

This study addresses this gap by systematically comparing social norm nudges and classical pre-bunking strategies on belief in misinformation within a randomized between-subjects survey experiment with three treatment groups (warning, classical pre-bunking, and social norm nudge) and one control group (N = 2 000).

The study also examines potential moderators, such as how strongly individuals identify with the social group made salient in the social norm nudge. As such, the results contribute to understanding the effectiveness of social norm nudges compared to classical pre-bunking strategies.

Consequences of the results for risk communication strategies aimed at strengthening citizens' resilience are discussed.

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RCC05 Trust Under Pressure: Crisis Communication, Misinformation, and Moral Credibility

PP 0744 From silence to apology: Papal crisis communication on sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church

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Sexual abuse of minors in the Catholic Church is a topic that has been appearing more or less constantly in the world media since the 1980s, posing burning questions to the leaders of the Catholic Church. Although cases of sexual abuse began to leak into the public domain as early as the 1960s, it was not until 2008 that the victims received their first official apology from the Pope. The news media almost always wrote about the topic as a crisis or scandal, and these labels resonated in public discourse. However, with one notable exception (Benedict, 2010), popes do not use the term "crisis" in their official communications.

The research focuses on how popes refer to the sexual abuse of minors in their official texts and how their communication on this topic has changed over time. The scope of this study covers the years 1997 through 2025, analyzing the official communications issued by Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis, and Leo XIV. The sample examined contains over 4,000 official texts signed by the head of the Catholic Church, ranging from extensive encyclicals to texts intended for internal communication within the Catholic Church to short greetings delivered in St. Peter's Square in Rome.

The analysis used a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Relevant texts were searched for using keywords. The construction of individual texts and the narration of the topic, specific formulations, rhetoric, and argumentation were examined inductively using a qualitative approach based on critical discourse analysis (CDA). The focus was placed on the linguistic choices and rhetorical devices embedded within the discursive strategies of individual popes. This research illuminates how the issue of sexual abuse was framed and what meanings were solidified within the official discourse of the Holy See. The communication elements used by the popes to restore the Church's reputation, which are based on the basic principles of crisis communication (Benoit, 1995), were analyzed. The specific use of pronouns and the corresponding indication of the speaker's acceptance of responsibility were identified (Coombs, 2020). Furthermore, communication practices expressing an adequate degree of empathy and a commitment to reputation restoration through papal moral values were monitored.

The findings suggest that each of the popes adopted a different crisis communication strategy in their texts and speeches, ranging from silence and denial of responsibility (John Paul II) to the leadership responsibility, apology, and deep empathy (Francis).

RCC05 Trust Under Pressure: Crisis Communication, Misinformation, and Moral Credibility

PP 0745 Moral credibility in influencer-led communication in the digital public sphere: A comparison of commercial crisis (Chiara Ferragni) and humanitarian advocacy (Didi Stone, UNICEF Democratic Republic of Congo)

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In contemporary digital culture, social media influencers increasingly act as moral voices, blending commercial branding and public visibility with ethical advocacy. Their ability to engage audiences in this role hinges on perceived moral credibility – meaning the degree to which followers view an influencer's actions as authentic, transparent, and aligned with proclaimed values, thereby fostering trust in their public persona. This study examines how moral credibility is constructed and contested in the digital public sphere through a comparative analysis of two high-profile cases: the reputational crisis surrounding Chiara Ferragni's charity-linked commercial campaign and Didi Stone's humanitarian advocacy in partnership with UNICEF in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Chiara Ferragni, one of Europe's most prominent influencers, has built a personal brand interweaving fashion entrepreneurship, lifestyle content, and cause-related marketing. Her moral authority was challenged in 2022 when a charity-branded Christmas campaign prompted accusations from Italian authorities that consumers were misled regarding the charitable destination of proceeds. Amid legal scrutiny and public outcry, Italian authorities imposed a fine of over one million euros for misleading commercial communication, reinforcing public attribution of responsibility and accelerating the collapse of Ferragni's moral credibility. The episode illustrates how quickly influencer legitimacy can erode when altruistic messaging is perceived as misaligned with commercial intent.

By contrast, Didi Stone, a Franco-Congolese model and UNICEF National Ambassador for the DRC, represents a different resolution of the same structural tension between influencer philanthropy and personal branding. Like Ferragni, Stone operates as a highly visible digital figure whose advocacy is mediated through her personal platform. However, in 2025, amid overlapping humanitarian crises in the DRC, Stone leveraged her digital presence in coordination with UNICEF-supported field campaigns in ways that reinforced her moral credibility. Grounded in institutional affiliation, field presence, and personal identification with affected communities, her communication emphasized transparency regarding roles and outcomes, as well as responsibility toward beneficiaries, limiting perceptions of performative self-promotion. In contrast to the Ferragni case, where commercial intent overshadowed ethical claims, Stone's advocacy aligned personal branding with humanitarian responsibility, contributing to sustained perceptions of authenticity and public trust.

The paper adopts a theory-driven and exploratory approach, drawing on Situational Crisis Communication Theory, the Social-Mediated Crisis Communication model, and scholarship on influencer authenticity and parasocial relationships. Rather than advancing causal claims, the analysis develops a comparative framework to examine how influencer-led communication operates within the digital public sphere, where moral credibility is negotiated through interactions among influencers, institutions, and networked publics. Moral emotions such as outrage and empathy are treated as mediating mechanisms rather than the primary analytical focus. The paper advances three provisional contributions: it extends crisis communication theory to influencer–institution collaborations in morally charged contexts; it clarifies how moral credibility is stabilized or destabilized through public contestation in digital public spheres; and it theorizes moral credibility as an emergent outcome of alignment between public persona, institutional support, and audience interaction. The paper concludes by outlining implications for research on influencer ethics, digital trust, and the governance of moral discourse in digitally mediated public life.

RCC06 Framing Crisis: Journalism, Public Engagement, and Institutional Responses

PP 0847 Green innovation or environmental risk? Media framing of data centers in Italian news discourse

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Despite the apparent immateriality of the internet evoked by the cloud metaphor (Mosco, 2014), digitalization- accelerated by artificial intelligence systems (Lehuédé, 2024; Crawford, 2021)- relies on a material supply chain that demands increasing amounts of energy and natural resources (Siddik et al., 2021; UNCTAD, 2024). While data centers are frequently promoted as drivers of innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth, they have also become contested infrastructures where environmental risks and political interests intersect (Biancalana, 2025).

Although recent research in critical data center studies has emphasized the political, spatial, and ecological implications of these infrastructures (Edwards et al., 2024), less attention has been paid to how news media shape public understandings of their risks and benefits (e.g., Rone, 2024). Italy represents a particularly relevant case in this regard, as it has recently emerged as a strategic hub for data center expansion in Southern Europe, while remaining underexplored in terms of how data centers are represented. Drawing on the social amplification of risk framework (Kasperson et al., 1988), this study conceptualizes media discourse as a key arena in which technological development, environmental concern, and political

values are negotiated. In line with research on ideological cultures in news discourse (Carvalho, 2007), the analysis explores how political orientations structure divergent interpretative repertoires surrounding data center expansion.

Methodologically, the research combines textual network analysis (Segev, 2020) with qualitative frame analysis (Entman, 1993). The corpus consists of news articles published between January 2024 and December 2025 and collected from mainstream, left-wing, and right-wing Italian newspapers. Headlines and meta-descriptions from online newspaper articles are analysed to identify co-occurring concepts and thematic clusters, which are subsequently interpreted as broader frames. Based on preliminary analysis, particular attention is paid to clusters related to national economic innovation, energy resources and green technologies, Big Tech power, and geopolitical dynamics. This mixed-method approach enables a comparative examination of how different media domains articulate the material and symbolic dimensions of digital sustainability.

The study assesses whether data centers are predominantly framed as "green" and smart infrastructures supporting innovation, or alternatively as emerging sources of environmental risk. In doing so, it examines how news discourse on the "green cloud" contributes to the naturalization- or problematization- of the material impacts of digitalization.

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RCC06 Framing Crisis: Journalism, Public Engagement, and Institutional Responses

PP 0848 Frames and sources in institutional risk communication: An experimental survey in Italy

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Today, risk communication must negotiate its relevance in contexts characterized by communicative overload, uncertainty, and skepticism toward science and institutional sources. The availability of clear and technically accurate information does not guarantee the effectiveness of messages; what becomes central is how information is presented and who conveys it—elements that are decisive for message acceptability, credibility, and recipients' willingness to adopt proactive behaviors. In fast-paced, information-saturated environments, such as digital contexts, information presentation can significantly affect attention and message evaluation, while also shaping and being shaped by perceptions of the sources disseminating those messages.

Framing and source are, indeed, "classic" topics in risk communication research. Nevertheless, the interaction between these two dimensions (especially in specific territorial contexts) warrants further investigation. It is necessary to examine how their interplay shapes perceptions of risk messages, particularly when disseminated by institutional actors.

Therefore, this paper proposes an experimental survey administered to a representative sample of the Italian online population (18+), designed to test, in a controlled manner, the roles of source, framing, and broader communication habits in the evaluation of messages related to hydrogeological risk. Concerning the source, the study investigates differences in perceived credibility and appropriateness between a political actor, such as the mayor, and a specialist and civic actor, such as the Civil Protection Department—two actors that, in the Italian regulatory framework, occupy distinct positions within the national risk communication system.

With respect to framing, the contribution draws on the tradition of gain frames (emphasizing the benefits of complying with recommendations) and loss frames (emphasizing the costs of non-compliance), examining their effectiveness and acceptability, as well as their association with the sources that convey them. The overarching objective of this study is to explore how different combinations of sources and frames affect perceptions of credibility, message clarity, and behavioral intentions. Moreover, the survey maps media habits and risk perceptions.

Thus, a survey was conducted among a representative sample of the Italian online population aged 18+ (N = 1,618). The questionnaire includes items designed to capture sociodemographic characteristics, risk perception, familiarity with early warning systems, information pathways, trust, and the perceived role of risk communication sources. This data collection is followed by a 2×2 between-subjects experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to four groups and asked to respond to questions based on a visual stimulus. The graphics vary according to the combination of source (Mayor vs.

Civil Protection) and frame (gain vs. loss). This design allows for investigating credibility, trust, and risk perception, using the survey's descriptive sections as control variables.

The survey was administered in December 2025; therefore, the results are currently under analysis. The analytical strategy focuses on identifying potential dimensions of heterogeneity, hypothesizing that gain and loss frames may function differently at distinctive levels of institutional trust; that the figure of the mayor may be evaluated differently across age groups; and that emotional and rational elements may emerge in distinct ways across different publics. Overall, the contribution outlines an evidence-based approach to producing effective risk communication messages.

RCC06 Framing Crisis: Journalism, Public Engagement, and Institutional Responses

PP 0849 Small drones making big headlines at European airports: Hybrid threats as a challenge for journalism ethics

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How to report ethically on news events that have been deliberately manufactured by hostile actors? It is the main question for this paper that focuses on analyzing the news coverage of the 2025 Europe-wide string of drone incidents and its implications for journalism ethics.

Our study is based on the concept of 'hybrid threats': actions intended to undermine or indirectly control a target by creatively combining various means, both overt and covert, military and –especially– non-military (Giannopoulos, Smith & Theocharidou 2021).

News media is important for detecting and reporting (potential) hybrid threats. However, a key characteristic of hybrid threats is their plausible deniability (Giannopoulos et al. 2021, 19–20). This puts pressure on journalists, for whom timely reporting is central. While investigations by authorities may take weeks or months, news cannot wait that long. Reporting based on limited information may lead to false interpretations, but not reporting would yield the communicative space to other actors. A dearth of high-quality information creates an ideal environment for the spread of untrue claims (e.g. Vraga et al. 2023, 91). The subsequent confusion is often the goal of hybrid threat operations (e.g. Splidsboel Hansen 2021). News organizations are faced with a dilemma: How much can they report without abetting the hybrid threat actor? Due to hybrid threats' deliberate ambiguity, full transparency with regards to missing information and suspected perpetrators may be just as counterproductive as strategic omission.

Drone-related disturbances quadrupled at European airports between January 2024 and November 2025 (Paternoster & Schumann 2025). For this paper, we gathered news media content from ProQuest Central and focused on newspapers. The search terms used were "drones" and "airports". Altogether 3,573 news stories were collected from over 2,000 newspapers from 1.1.2025 to 31.12.2025.

We will first conduct a quantitative content analysis and then form a representative sample of news stories to qualitatively analyze the reporting of drone incidents from a journalism ethics perspective. We will focus on transparency as a tenet of journalistic ethics and its application in the coverage, particularly in terms of attribution. We conclude with practical recommendations for journalists covering suspected hybrid threats.

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RCC06 Framing Crisis: Journalism, Public Engagement, and Institutional Responses

PP 0850 The role of journalists in face of military threats: Autonomy, crisis communication and making of mediated realities

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European societies more and more faces with various crisis, as well as military threats and hybrid crises, which leads to threats to national security. In these time of crisis, journalism becomes one of the most important mediator between

government institutions responsible for crisis response, management and society. The significantly increaced urge for the news and speed of sharing, news platforms competitions for audience attention and heightened political – national security pressures can affect information verification processes, clarity and ethical judgement, which could affect trust in media, state institutions and in such way intensify social polarisation. The analysis examines journalists role under military threat conditions by linking crisis communication imperatives with professional autonomy, ethical dilemmas and the contemporary risks of "simulated" mediated realities.

The analysis develops framework that combines 1. Normative ethics accounts of journalism as a profession grounded in autonomy, factuality, transparency and service to the public; 2. Crisis and war reporting as a high-stake environment where published information can reduce harm, but also can trigger panic, propaganda or strategic vulnerability; 3. A Jean Baudrillard perspective of simulation and hyperreality, which helps to explain how news of crisis can shift from representing events to producing emotionally compelling content which affects factual grounding. With this background, analysis raises questions: 1. How journalist autonomy and external restrictions (censorship, institutional control, marketing strategies) shapes crisis/war reporting? 2. How do journalism ethical principles (telling the truth, credibility, harm minimization and autonomy, enters news agencies decisions when war-related information can impact security risks? 3. When crisis communication in the media contributes to increasing public awareness, and when it increases uncertainty due to sensational content?

In the analysis there is a proposition for a comparison of two historical case analysis to illustrate how different "information control regimes" reconfigure journalistic responsibility towards journalists' profession and public. The comparison is grounded by two empirical examples: Vietnam War reporting as a case associated with a high journalistic freedom and strong public impact to politics decisions, and Israel's conflict environment as an example where journalism faces a high military and government censorship and culturally embedded self-censorship structure reporting choices. The analysis combines academic accounts of these contexts along with readings of representative journalistic content (broadcast narratives, photojournalism, editorial decisions) to reveal recurring tensions between public's right to know, democratic accountability and security restraint.

RCC06 Framing Crisis: Journalism, Public Engagement, and Institutional Responses

PP 0851 Engaging spontaneous volunteers in disaster management and risk communication in the Italian context

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In recent years, Europe has faced overlapping crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, large-scale flooding, and mass displacement following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These events have further highlighted the growing role of spontaneous volunteers (citizens who offer help outside formal emergency management structures) in disaster risk management (DRM). While the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 promotes inclusive and participatory approaches, the extent to which spontaneous volunteers can contribute effectively depends largely on national institutional arrangements, regulatory frameworks, and risk communication practices. Empirical, comparative research on this topic remains limited and largely relies on pre-2020 data.

This contribution is part of a broader study which aims to examine how spontaneous volunteers are engaged in DRM in five European contexts: Estonia, the Netherlands, Italy, Malta, and La Réunion. Building on desk research and semi-structured expert interviews, the study explores three research questions: (1) what regulations and institutional arrangements exist for engaging spontaneous volunteers; (2) which methods, tools, and risk communication practices are used across the phases of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery; and (3) what lessons have been learned from recent crises regarding collaboration between authorities and spontaneous volunteers. The analysis reveals significant cross-national variation. In countries with strong traditions of organised volunteering and formalised civil protection systems, spontaneous volunteering remains weakly institutionalised and is often managed ad hoc, particularly during response and recovery phases, with risk communication frequently fragmented or informal.

The contribution especially focuses on the Italian context. Despite extensive organised volunteer networks, spontaneous volunteers played a crucial role during the 2023–2024 Emilia-Romagna floods, while operated largely outside formal regulations. Digital platforms, social media, and messaging apps emerged as central risk communication and coordination infrastructures, enabling rapid mobilisation, peer-to-peer information exchange, and situational awareness. At the same time, these communication practices generated challenges related to safety, misinformation, responsibility, and trust between spontaneous volunteers and formal responders. Barriers to effective engagement include restrictive legal frameworks, liability and insurance concerns, limited training and mentoring capacity, and scepticism among professional responders. Enabling factors include flexible local coordination, recognition of community-based knowledge, short-form training, and clear, timely, and dialogic risk communication.

Overall, the study demonstrates how institutional structures, risk communication practices, and digital coordination tools jointly shape the possibilities for democratic participation in disaster response. It concludes with policy-relevant

recommendations for integrating spontaneous volunteers into DRM without undermining their autonomy, emphasising adaptive governance, continuous risk communication in "peacetime," and co-produced guidelines that bridge formal and informal response capacities while supporting safer and more resilient community action.

RCC07 Risk, Meaning, and Governance: From Everyday Finance to Prolonged Crisis

PP 0852 Take a risk – or risk it all: The role of alternative risks in the financialization of everyday life

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In recent decades, financial markets and practices have become more embedded in the everyday lives of broader segments of the population – a development often described as the financialization of everyday life. A key aspect of this process, driven by market-oriented actors such as banks and brokerage firms, is a reconfigured understanding of risk-taking. Risk is no longer depicted merely as something the individual must accept; it is framed as morally and practically desirable, and as the most rational strategy for securing one's economic future. Embracing this logic may involve, for instance, learning to identify one's "risk profile" when investing in stocks and mutual funds, or taking on a substantial mortgage to enter the housing market.

This paper introduces the concept of "alternative risks" to address a critical yet under-theorized aspect of the financialization of everyday life: the risks associated with *avoiding* financial risk-taking. Building on Luhmann's (2017) notion of "prevention risks", we conceptualize alternative risks as a specific form of "fictional expectation" (Beckert 2016), centered upon the construction of undesirable future scenarios that are projected to happen should individuals and/or society fail to embrace financial risk-taking. Unlike the concept of alternative costs, which is primarily confined to economic calculations, alternative risks encompass broader imaginaries that are strategically crafted and communicated by market-oriented actors, e.g., to counteract loss aversive behavior among individuals or promote pro-market political policies.

We develop this concept through an analysis of how Swedish real estate brokers, investment firms, and journalists have constructed threatening visions of the future to advocate specific individual/societal solutions from the 1990s onwards – a period marked by pension reforms, growing mutual fund investments, and increasingly large mortgages. Drawing on advertisement campaigns, news articles, and editorials, we demonstrate how alternative risks – manifested in the use of future scenarios involving credit debt, social exclusion, and broken social contracts – have been mobilized to argue against the promotion of rental apartments and taxes on fund savings. By showing how alternative risks are used to enhance uncertainty in contrast to "calculable", "safe", and "predictable" forms of financial risk-taking, the study opens new avenues for examining the role of media and communication not only in the financialization of everyday life in a time of volatile financial markets and rising private debt, but also in shaping the relationship between risk and uncertainty more broadly.

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RCC07 Risk, Meaning, and Governance: From Everyday Finance to Prolonged Crisis

PP 0853 Translating "risk": The global travels of a modern concept in the early modern Chinese press

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During early modern China's "Sattelzeit" (Saddle Period, 1840–1949), the social cognitive schema underwent a profound reshaping, in which the introduction and evolution of the "risk" concept served as a core manifestation of modernity's implantation. Building on the theories of Ulrich Beck and Niklas Luhmann, who emphasize that "risk"—unlike "danger" attributed to external nature or divine forces—refers to calculable uncertainty arising from human decision-making, this study explores how "risk (fengxian)" as a modern concept matured in China. It investigates what it meant for "risk" to transition into its modern sense and how it was locally constructed through the medium of modern newspapers.

This research is grounded in the Social Construction of Communication and the Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Discourse (SKAD). It treats modern newspapers as objectivation of knowledge, analyzing the relationship between sign usage as social practice and the production and transformation of social orders of knowledge. Therefore, the study employs a corpus-assisted approach, integrating the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) from Critical Discourse Analysis. A comprehensive corpus spanning early modern Chinese history was established, primarily utilizing Shenbao, supplemented by Ta Kung Pao and other modern periodical databases. The analysis includes a quantitative investigation using word co-occurrence analysis and network centrality measurements to identify key semantic turning points. This is followed by a qualitative in-depth analysis of discourse across four dimensions, building modern concept of "risk" : intra-textual linguistic features,

intertextual and interdiscursive relationships, extra-linguistic social institutional variables, and the broader macro-historical context.

The findings reveal that "risk" in early modern China evolved from describing external natural threats like "maritime wind disasters" (danger) to a modern concept associated with rational decision-making and economic calculation (risk). This process unfolded across five stages: incubation, problematic, expansion, critical, and stabilization. Specifically, the consequences of risk shifted from "shipwreck and loss of life" to "damaged cargo and loss of profit"; the risk environment moved from "perilous journeys" to "market fluctuations"; and risk-related agency shifted from "divine fate" to "human decision." These changes collectively pushed "risk" toward a counter-factual orientation, establishing a temporalized relationship between the present and the future as a modernized "conceptual dispositif". Through the discursive practices of meteorological forecasting, insurance services, and financial markets, the agency over the future was relocated from "heavenly/natural fate" to "rational human action," extending economic logic into everyday life.

This shift profoundly reflects the modern social transformation described by Karl Polanyi: social relations became re-embedded within an economic system centered on efficiency, credit, and profit-and-loss calculation. While this cognitive transition marks the maturation of modern governance, it also manifests the "Epistemicide" feared by Boaventura de Sousa Santos—the replacement of traditional knowledge systems regarding contingency, fate, and community reciprocity by Western rational-calculative logic. Ultimately, the maturation of the "risk" concept represents not merely a linguistic shift but a deep-seated construction and identification with the essence of modernity within the communicative practices of modern Chinese society.

RCC07 Risk, Meaning, and Governance: From Everyday Finance to Prolonged Crisis

PP 0854 One framework, many practices: Comparing risk communication and community engagement in prolonged crisis governance

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Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) is widely promoted by WHO/Europe as their foundational framework for effective public health emergency response, emphasizing trust-building, transparency, listening, and meaningful engagement with communities. Despite its prominence in global guidance, there remains limited empirical insight into how RCCE principles are enacted within government decision-making during prolonged, high-uncertainty crises. This study examines how government leaders interpreted, operationalized, and constrained RCCE principles during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a particular focus on cross-national variation in implementation across governance systems.

The study addresses three research questions: (1) How were RCCE principles understood and enacted by government leaders during COVID-19? (2) To what extent were RCCE principles integrated into decision-making processes rather than confined to outward-facing communication? and (3) How did political, institutional, and cultural contexts shape the enactment of RCCE across countries? Empirically, the study draws on qualitative interviews with government officials and advisors in Italy, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The analysis examines concrete RCCE-related practices, including public listening mechanisms, culturally and linguistically adapted communication, transparency practices, and the use of community feedback in policy and communication decisions.

Theoretically, the study integrates RCCE scholarship with implementation theory and crisis governance, conceptualizing RCCE as a set of practices that are translated and negotiated within institutional and political contexts rather than uniformly applied. This approach enables examination of how global RCCE principles are reinterpreted as they move into national decision-making environments.

Findings reveal marked variation in the enactment of RCCE principles across countries. In Italy, RCCE was operationalized through large-scale listening infrastructures, particularly toll-free public information lines that facilitated sustained two-way communication and informed adaptive communication decisions. In Spain, RCCE was enacted through culturally and linguistically tailored communication strategies, where language proficiency and contextual adaptation were central to engaging diverse communities and maintaining trust. In Sweden and the Netherlands, RCCE principles were more strongly embedded within institutional governance structures, with high levels of institutional trust enabling transparent communication, consistent messaging, and the integration of public health expertise into decision-making, though with less emphasis on direct community dialogue mechanisms. By contrast, in the United States and the United Kingdom, RCCE implementation was more fragmented. While transparency and information dissemination were emphasized, systematic listening and community feedback were less consistently integrated into decision-making, with communication strategies shaped more heavily by political negotiation, media dynamics, and centralized messaging.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that RCCE principles were most substantively enacted where leaders adopted communicative and adaptive orientations and where institutional conditions supported engagement as an input to decision-making rather than a downstream communication activity. The study contributes to risk communication and crisis governance scholarship by clarifying how RCCE moves from normative guidance to situated practice, highlighting the leadership and

contextual conditions under which community engagement becomes a meaningful component of government crisis response.

RCC07 Risk, Meaning, and Governance: From Everyday Finance to Prolonged Crisis

PP 0855 Nedsläckt Land/Blackout Country: Reality TV, crisis preparedness capabilities and public value

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Survivalist reality television, like *Robinson*, *Survivor*, *Alone*, *Outlast*, *Surviving Paradise* and *Siren: Survive the Island*, typically centers on individual resilience, wilderness survival, and competitive elimination formats. *Nedsläckt Land* (transl. *Blackout Country*) is a reality TV series broadcast by the Swedish public service broadcaster SVT in 2019 (with a rerun in 2025 and currently accessible on its streaming service SVT Play) that takes a different approach. It departs from by dramatizing a large-scale societal disruption: a severe solar storm triggers a prolonged national power outage, leading to the breakdown of critical infrastructure and essential services. Framed by the producers as a public-service 'experiment', the program situates participants in a rural environment where they must navigate resource scarcity (water, food, heating, communications) and collective coping, complemented by commentary from subject-matter experts (researchers and civil-contingency authorities).

Existing scholarship has examined the rise of "prepper culture" (Mellander, 2023) and foregrounded the potential of cultural approaches to crisis (Arvidson et al, 2013). However, the (ambiguous) role of popular media in fostering societal crisis preparedness – including risk awareness, adaptive/coping capacities, and understandings of systemic and individual vulnerability – remains comparatively underexplored.

The study draws from the Citizen Crisis Communication (CCC) model (Odén et al., 2016). The model utilizes the concept of capability, inspired by Martha Nussbaum's work (1997). In contrast to organization-centered approaches, the CCC model focuses on the key functions that citizens need as members of a society in crisis situations, and how crisis communication can help strengthen these capabilities. The model outlines three capabilities: survival (appropriate action), democratic (accountability and responsibility), and social (communicating hope, enhancing crisis preparedness, and strengthening interpersonal and societal trust).

Against the backdrop of ongoing public debates about civil preparedness, resilience, and the responsibilities of public service media in Sweden and beyond, this paper combines theories of mediatization, post-documentary, and disaster and crisis communication to ask:

i) How does reality-based television mediate systemic and individual vulnerabilities in societal crisis?
ii) *Nedsläckt Land* contribute to enhancing survival, democratic and social capabilities of citizens in crisis?
iii) How do such representations intersect with debates about reality TV's societal function and public value?

By bringing (reality) TV studies into dialogue with crisis preparedness research, this paper discusses the potential of popular media to shape and strengthen citizens' capabilities before and during a societal crisis.

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RCC09 Trust, Visibility, and Vulnerability in Contemporary Risk Communication

PP 1061 Framing vulnerability in climate emergencies: Institutional social media strategies and public counter-narratives after the mortegliano hailstorm

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In an era characterized by "shifting grounds" and intensifying climate-related disruptions, public institutional communication serves as a fundamental infrastructure for emergency management. Beyond mere information dissemination, it functions as a mechanism for operational coordination and the discursive construction of public legitimacy (Lovari & Ducci, 2022), directly impacting the resilience of vulnerable populations.

This paper investigates the communicative response to the severe hailstorm that struck Mortegliano (Udine, Italy) in July 2023. This extreme meteorological phenomenon, which set new European records for hail size, resulted in a localized humanitarian and economic crisis, overwhelming the community's immediate coping capacities and pulverizing

infrastructure. Adopting a theoretical framework that integrates the Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) model with the social construction of vulnerability, the study analyzes the digital strategies of two pivotal actors: the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the Regional Civil Protection. Specifically, it examines their content production on their official accounts on Facebook and Instagram during the thirty days following the event, focusing on the representations of vulnerability, alongside the resulting interactions and reactions from their publics.

Methodologically, the research employs a mixed-methods approach. It utilizes topic modeling on a dataset of posts (N = 195) and user comments (N = 1499), complemented by a qualitative thematic analysis of key entries to unpack linguistic strategies and representations of vulnerability.

Findings reveal a significant communicative asymmetry. While the institutional social media output effectively managed technical updates, it predominantly framed vulnerable subjects as passive recipients of top-down assistance. Vulnerability was discursively reduced to physical and economic dimensions, focusing on material damage, while neglecting relational, psychological, and informational disparities. Conversely, the analysis of user comments unveils a complex counter-narrative structured around three axes: grassroots solidarity, the contextualization of the event within the climate change crisis, and critiques of institutional efficacy.

The study highlights an unresolved tension between the institutional framing of emergencies as isolated technical disruptions and the public perception of systemic crises requiring transformative policy shifts. Ultimately, the paper argues that despite the interactive potential of social media, institutional practices remain anchored in reactive, top-down logics. The lack of a communicative strategy oriented toward genuine dialogue transforms social media into arenas of discursive friction between institutional mandates and civic expectations, rather than spaces where collective agency and shared resilience can be co-constructed.

RCC09 Trust, Visibility, and Vulnerability in Contemporary Risk Communication

PP 1062 "It's a kind of patina you immediately recognise": Generative artificial intelligence in the changing landscape of risk communication

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Generative artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly being considered a tool for public and institutional communication, including risk communication. Its adoption may contribute to the production of clearer and more targeted messages, yet it raises unresolved ethical and operational questions. Communicating risks goes beyond information transmission (*what* is conveyed); it involves a relational dimension concerning *who* communicates and with what authority. For this reason, technological innovations such as AI require contextualisation and focused reflection.

Existing literature has primarily investigated the content and format of risk communication, as well as their combined effects. Trust, framing, empathy, and institutionalisation are among the most frequently examined dimensions. By contrast, the role of AI remains underexplored: it is necessary to understand how citizens perceive and interpret AI-generated content in institutional contexts, and how this may affect central dimensions of risk communication, such as transparency and trust. This contribution then focuses on the authorial role of AI, assessing its viability in producing risk communication messages.

This study investigates how institutional legitimacy is affected when AI enters the communication chain, particularly among audiences with specific sensitivities toward environmental issues and technologies, such as Generation Z. The aim is to explore how AI-generated content (and its disclosure) reshapes credibility and responsibility in the production of risk communication.

To this end, we adopted a qualitative research design combining prompt-based AI content generation with semi-structured interviews. Drawing on institutional materials from Italy's Civil Protection on seismic and hydrogeological hazards, we generated simulated social media posts using a generative AI system. Each message varied along two dimensions: (1) *framing* (gain vs. loss) and (2) *source* (mayor vs. local Civil Protection authority). The posts were presented as visual stimuli to 32 university students enrolled in communication courses. Participants were initially invited to discuss preferred formats, tone, and credibility without knowing the origin of the messages. Only after this evaluation was the AI-generated authorship disclosed, allowing us to examine how awareness of technological mediation affects perceptions of credibility, ethical acceptability, and the expected role of institutions in risk communication.

The findings show that the adoption of AI elicits contrasting reactions. On the one hand, there is clear curiosity about the tool and its potential applications in institutional contexts; on the other, participants express concerns regarding agency and responsibility in the curation and validation of content. For the interviewees, the use of AI highlights that trust does not reside solely in the content of messages but primarily in the recognisable human supervisor, such as the Civil Protection authority or the mayor. Attention to framing amplifies this dynamic: the extreme and polarised tones shaped by AI are noted by almost all participants. While they acknowledge the functional utility of such messages (gain: construction of a sense of community; loss: emphasis on the consequences of actions), the lack of nuance makes them difficult to accept outside a simulated context. Overall, the analysis confirms that AI is not a neutral actor in risk communication, but contributes to reshaping actors, credibility, and expectations.

RCC09 Trust, Visibility, and Vulnerability in Contemporary Risk Communication

PP 1063 Understanding information-seeking intentions and risk perceptions in the context of sustainable mobility: Insights from a rural real-world laboratory in Germany

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Transport-related greenhouse gas emissions remain one of the most persistent barriers to achieving climate targets. In the EU, transport is the only major sector where emissions have risen recently; road transport accounts for about three quarters, with private cars responsible for over 60%. Germany reflects this trend: from 1990 to 2023, the transport sector's share of national emissions increased significantly, and households now emit more from mobility than housing. These developments demonstrate how mobility has become a critical environmental risk area- shaped not only by technology but equally by communication, public awareness, and behavioral factors.

Despite its societal importance, risk communication about everyday mobility, especially regarding long-term climate risks, has received limited scholarly attention. Our research helps fill this gap by integrating environmental communication, mobility studies, and risk and crisis communication. As part of an interdisciplinary project on rural mobility transition, we conducted a standardized survey with 633 participants in summer 2025 in a rural federal state in central Germany. The study explored mobility behavior, risk perceptions, attitudes toward the transition, and (risk) information-seeking behavior – fundamental communicative mechanisms during environmental uncertainty and socio-technical change.

The study draws on the Risk Information Seeking and Processing (RISP) model and the Planned Risk Information Seeking (PRISM) model. Both frameworks assume that subjective information insufficiency and informational social norms shape intentions to seek information, moderated by risk perception, affective responses, and prior information-seeking experiences. While originally developed for personal risks, these frameworks have increasingly been applied to impersonal risks such as environmental and societal challenges. This study extends that work by examining risks associated with mobility behavior, where threats are perceived as societal rather than personally relevant.

Findings show a moderate overall perception of mobility-related climate risks. Respondents acknowledge societal risks more strongly than personal risks and primarily assign responsibility for the mobility transition to political, economic, and scientific institutions. The personal willingness to change mobility behavior remains limited, and mobility routines are strongly car-centered. Information-seeking behavior is characterized by moderate perceived knowledge, heightened information needs, but relatively low active search efforts and weak informational social norms.

A multiple linear regression (adj. R^2 = .54) identifies attitudes toward seeking, informational norms, affective response, and risk perception as positive predictors of information-seeking intention. Strikingly, information insufficiency emerges as a negative predictor, suggesting potential defensive avoidance – a phenomenon rarely examined in environmental risk contexts and relevant for crisis communication research.

By highlighting how communication shapes responses to emerging environmental risks in everyday life, this study contributes to the Risk and Crisis Communication Section's focus on uncertainty, societal transformation, and interdisciplinary integration. It underscores the need for communication strategies that emphasize personal relevance, strengthen social norms around staying informed, and address motivational avoidance as a barrier to public engagement in the mobility transition.

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RCC10 Risk Communication and Institutional Trust in the Age of Disinformation

PP 1159 Blaming the government: The impact of misinformation on governmental trust during natural disasters

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Introduction

In crisis situations such as natural disasters, people often try to make sense of what has happened by assigning blame. According to Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1985), this process helps individuals restore a sense of predictability and control when faced with uncontrollable events. By attributing responsibility to a powerful external actor, such as the government, people create narratives that makes the disaster seem less random or threatening. However, this sense-making process can also backfire, as blaming institutions may foster public distrust in said institutions. While prior research has linked misinformation to declining institutional trust in other crises (e.g., COVID-19), its role during natural disasters remains

underexplored. The present study examined how exposure to government-blaming misinformation after a natural disaster influences belief in the misinformation and governmental trust.

Method

In a *between-subjects* experiment, 687 Dutch participants were exposed to an adapted NOS news article focusing on the 2021 floods in Limburg, the Netherlands. Half of the participants were exposed to misinformation, consisting of a false Facebook post claiming the government was responsible for the disaster, asserting to a popular conspiracy theory that the deliberate removal of dams by the government was the cause of the flooding. The dependent variables were belief in misinformation (i.e., the government *deliberately* caused the floods; α = .90) and governmental trust (α = .95). Conspiracy thinking was measured as a potential moderator (α = .86).

Results

Focusing specifically on the mechanisms underlying governmental trust, a moderated mediation analysis revealed that exposure to misinformation indirectly reduced trust in the government through increased belief in the misinformation (b = –0.043, SE = 0.017, p = .009, 95% CI [–0.079, –0.014]), at mean levels of conspiracy thinking (M = 3.12). Exposure to government-blaming misinformation significantly increased belief in the idea that the government deliberately caused the floods (b = 0.26, SE = 0.09, p = .003). In turn, stronger belief in this misinformation predicted lower trust in the government (b = –0.17, SE = 0.03, p < .001). This indirect effect was even stronger at higher levels of conspiracy thinking (b = –0.100, SE = 0.028, p < .001, 95% CI [–0.157, –0.050]). The direct effect of misinformation exposure on trust was not significant (b = 0.06, p = .30). All effects were controlled for baseline trust in the government measured prior to the manipulation.

Conclusion

The results show that even single exposure to a relatively extreme conspiracy claim (suggesting that the government deliberately caused the floods) was enough to increase belief in the misinformation. Higher belief in the misinformation was associated with lower trust in the government. This indirect effect was particularly strong among individuals with higher levels of conspiracy thinking, suggesting that individuals with a higher predisposition to conspiratorial beliefs seem more vulnerable to accepting blame-attributing misinformation. Overall, the results indicate that even brief exposure to such claims may distort the public's perceptions of responsibility, making it harder for governments to manage natural disasters effectively and maintain public trust, at a time when it is needed most.

RCC10 Risk Communication and Institutional Trust in the Age of Disinformation

PP 1160 Co-creation and care in risk and emergency communication with older adults in Portugal

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In March 2025, the European Union urged citizens to prepare "72-hour survival kits" for crises such as wildfires, pandemics, or cyberattacks. A month later, a major blackout across the Iberian Peninsula revealed the vulnerability of digital infrastructures and the rapid spread of misinformation. This event highlighted the urgent need for communication strategies that are effective, clear, and inclusive, particularly for socially and technologically disadvantaged groups.

This study presents the results of an exploratory research on the perceptions, preferences, and challenges faced by older adults in receiving messages about risks and emergencies. Two one-hour think tank sessions were held with groups of 5 to 6 participants (men and women over 65), all attendees of senior academies in the municipality of Leiria, Portugal. The sessions were previously authorized and audio-recorded. The activity helped to identify how this population has been informed about risks and crises in Portugal, the main obstacles to accessing guidance, and their assessment of strategies adopted by the EU and the Portuguese government. Good communication practice recommendations were also collected.

Inspired by the principles of communication of care (Florczak, 2024) and inclusive co-creation (Aliska et al., 2025), this proposal recognizes that older adults are not merely passive receivers but social actors whose knowledge can enrich the design of communication strategies. The empirical results reveal that older adults trust traditional media, value clarity and empathy in messages, and wish to participate actively in emergency preparedness strategies. These findings reinforce, in practice, the theoretical propositions of Florczak (2024) and Aliska et al. (2025).

When participants state that "we lack care, not just information," they express what Florczak (2024) calls the communicative dimension of care, a relational approach based on attentiveness and the recognition of the other's humanity. This ethical listening goes beyond instrumental efficiency, seeking to create communicative environments in which people feel valued and capable of acting. At the same time, the participants' suggestions for using local channels, practical training, and community engagement reflect the logic of inclusive co-creation described by Aliska et al. (2025). If communication is built with citizens, and not merely directed to them, trust and collective autonomy are likely to be strengthened, key components of social resilience. This co-creative practice breaks with the deficit model of communication – where the public is viewed as lacking information – and promotes mutual learning between authorities and the community.

These findings echo Rubert and Scroferneker's (2024) argument that public communication can be a driver of the culture of care when it assumes a dialogical and participatory stance. In their view, grounded in Wolton's (2023) notion of alterity and negotiation of coexistence, care is inseparable from communication that recognizes difference and vulnerability. In moments of crisis and disaster, such as those discussed in this study, public communication becomes a moral and civic duty, centered on the right to information, transparency, and social participation. By placing care at the center of the process, it advocates for public communication that is more empathetic, understandable, and safe.

RCC10 Risk Communication and Institutional Trust in the Age of Disinformation

PP 1161 Countering disinformation in a digital society: Media/institutional responses to the LVU crisis in Sweden

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In recent years, disinformation campaigns have increasingly targeted democratic institutions, exploiting digital platforms to spread false narratives and undermine public trust. Campaigns have been known to exploit already existing cleavages and tensions in society, in some cases adding to already existing challenges of distrust in institutions and undermining cohesion.

In late 2021, Sweden became the target of a large-scale social media disinformation campaign directed at its social services, centring on the application of the Care of Young Persons (Special Provisions) Act (LVU). The campaign falsely alleged systematic abuses by Swedish authorities, particularly the unjust removal of children from their families, and rapidly gained traction across digital platforms. According to the Swedish Psychological Defence Agency, the LVU campaign constituted the most serious disinformation attack Sweden had faced to date, exposing vulnerabilities in institutional communication and societal trust.

This paper examines how the LVU disinformation crisis was understood, managed, and countered by key professional actors within Swedish media organizations and social services authorities. Drawing on qualitative, semi-structured interviews with representatives from social services and journalists working in newsrooms in Sweden, the study explores how different professional communities navigated the challenges of responding to coordinated disinformation in a highly polarized and digitally mediated information environment.

The results reveal six common themes: 1) Disinformation disrupts: the consequences of the campaign for the professional praxis of social workers and journalists. 2) Social Media Effect: the experience of particularity of the campaign as a phenomenon predominantly in the online information environment. (3) Emotions and affect: how the campaign triggered and exploited emotional engagement. (4) Reconfiguring communication approaches: linguistic and cultural adaptability fast forward. (5) Root causes of societal exclusion: how the campaign was perceived in terms of its cultural context. (6) Societal Trust: how the campaign laid bare gaps in trust and promoted attempts to bridge them. The paper contributes to the debates on digital disinformation, institutional resilience, and the mediation of trust in contemporary democracies.

Keywords
disinformation; societal trust; journalism; social services; Sweden; LVU campaign; digital media; qualitative interviews

RCC10 Risk Communication and Institutional Trust in the Age of Disinformation

PP 1162 Countering the invisible threat: The impact of fake news and deepfakes on trust in central banks and the evolution of strategic communication

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Central banks are currently in a paradoxical position: they must engage more with their stakeholders, but every word risks being distorted. Their legitimacy rests not on popularity, but on trust- and trust today is under threat also from the rise of artificial intelligence (AI).

In a period when a once marginal risk – misinformation and disinformation amplified by synthetic media - is becoming increasingly prominent, the growing challenges of communication do not bypass these institutions. From fake news articles to deepfake videos impersonating central bank officials, deliberately spread to spark confusion or even panic, disinformation adds to eroding public trust in these institutions, undermining their integrity. Moreover, recent incidents demonstrate that no central bank is immune to disinformation- scale, reputation, or geography make little difference.

This research focuses on the impact of AI-driven misinformation and disinformation on public trust in central banks, as well as on how these institutions manage their strategic communication in response. Based on a comparative study between the European Central Bank (ECB), the Banque de France (BdF), and the National Bank of Romania (NBR), the postdoctoral study pursues two main directions: (1) How disinformation affects trust in central banks and public perception, and (2) How central banks adapt their communication strategies in response to reputational threats.

The paper presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Through an online survey conducted in France (N = 500) and Romania (N = 500), the research collects data that facilitates understanding of how people's exposure to AI-generated disinformation, particularly synthetic audio and video, can affect their perception and trust in the central bank, as well as how people perceive the central bank's communication and responses to disinformation. Preliminary results of the quantitative component of the paper reveal whether there are any differences in terms of perceived exposure to disinformation effects on trust and public image (and the moderator effects of media literacy, AI literacy, and financial literacy) between Romania and France.

The qualitative component is based on a series of interviews with representatives of the ECB, BdF, and NBR (4 to 6 respondents for each central bank) across departments directly or indirectly engaged with external communication or information risk. The aim is to capture their views on whether disinformation impacts and poses risks to their institutions, and if so, to what extent, as well as to understand how these challenges are currently managed within the institutions, particularly through strategic communication.

Despite the growing digital complexity, the effects of disinformation on the trust, legitimacy, authority, and operational clarity of central banks remain an under-explored topic. This project aims to fill this critical gap in the literature and stress the urgent need to respond effectively to the subtle but growing threat of disinformation.

Keywords
institutional trust, fake news, deepfake, disinformation, communication, central bank, AI

Possible sections
- Risk and Crisis Communication
- Organisational and Strategic Communication
- Digital Culture and Communication

SCI01 AI & Environmental Communication

PP 0006 Between progress and risk: Framing communicative AI in German newspapers

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The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has garnered considerable public attention with extensive debate on benefits and risks. News media play a central role in shaping the public understanding of emerging technologies by structuring them through specific frames. Prior research shows that AI coverage oscillates between frames of progress and risk, with portrayals becoming more critical over time (Ittefaq et al., 2025). Existing research has largely examined artificial intelligence in general (Brause et al., 2023). Only few studies have explicitly addressed communicative artificial intelligence (ComAI) specifically. Previous studies have established that risks and benefits of ComAI are present in public discourse (e.g., Tandoc et al., 2025). However, empirical research remains limited regarding large-scale analyses of news coverage published after the release of ChatGPT. Existing studies rely on small samples or focus on isolated dimensions of framing.

Drawing on a substantially larger dataset and applying automated content analysis, the present study enables a systematic assessment of the prevalence of specific risk and progress frames, their associations with actors and topics, and their development over time. The sample consisted of n = 3,838 articles published between November 2022 and July 2024 in German print news outlets. A codebook was developed based on previous research. A subsample of n = 464 articles was coded by four trained coders and used to validate the automated analysis. Reliabilities between the AI and manual coding were excellent (Gwet's AC > .70).

Results show that 68.92% of all articles contain at least one risk-related frame, while 68.45% include at least one progress-related frame. Nearly half of the articles (49.06%) combine both risk- and progress-oriented framings.

Among progress-oriented frames, coverage is dominated by portrayals of ComAI as a technological advancement (31.50%), followed by general progress narratives (27.46%) and references to societal benefits (16.81%). Risk-oriented framing most frequently emphasizes general risks (25.22%), information-related risks (23.81%), and economic risks (19.80%).

Media attention to ComAI increased after the introduction of ChatGPT and subsequently leveled off over time, reaching a plateau. This saturation effect suggests a phase of normalization in which ComAI became an established topic in news reporting.

We also identified ten key events related to the development and regulation surrounding ComAI. Time-series analyses show no consistent event-specific effects on either article volume or framing patterns. Instead, coverage dynamics align with the observed saturation effect.

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SCI01 AI & Environmental Communication

PP 0007 AI-mediated futures: Algorithmic imaginaries in the communication of ecological issues

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AI-Mediated Futures: Algorithmic Imaginaries in the Communication of Ecological Issues

This theoretical paper examines how artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes the communication of ecological issues and future environmental scenarios in digital media. It argues that AI should be understood not only as a set of tools that assists content creation, but also as a socio-technical arrangement that structures what becomes visible, credible, and actionable in public discourse about ecological futures. By integrating scholarship from sustainability communication, futures studies, and algorithmic mediation, the paper develops a conceptual framework to explain how "algorithmic imaginaries" of ecological futures are produced, circulated, and interpreted across platformed environments. Rather than offering empirical results, the paper synthesizes recent research to clarify mechanisms, risks, and opportunities, and to provide a structured agenda for future empirical work.

The proposed framework specifies three analytically distinct yet interdependent levels. **First, Production** concerns how AI participates in the construction of ecological future narratives through prompt-based generation, synthetic imagery, automated summarization, and AI-assisted forecasting and scenario writing. At this level, the paper highlights how AI can expand communicative capacity (e.g., rapid visualization of scenarios, translation and localization of sustainability messages), while simultaneously introducing representational risks such as homogenized "template" narratives, uncertainty laundering (where speculative outputs appear authoritative), and the reproduction of dominant cultural frames that marginalize alternative ecological imaginaries.

Second, Distribution addresses how platform recommender systems and ranking logics condition the reach and salience of ecological content. The paper foregrounds the role of algorithmic amplification, engagement optimization, and moderation regimes in shaping what ecological futures are encountered by audiences, under what emotional registers (e.g., doom, hope, solutionism), and with what degrees of contestation. Particular emphasis is placed on how platform logics may privilege simplified or sensational future projections, reward polarizing framings, and create attention bottlenecks that disadvantage slow, contextual, and uncertainty-aware sustainability communication.

Third, Reception examines how audiences interpret and negotiate AI-mediated future projections depending on their critical media literacy, algorithmic literacy, and epistemic trust. The paper conceptualizes reception as an interpretive process influenced by perceptions of AI credibility, perceived institutional authority, and users' awareness of personalization and ranking dynamics. It also considers how algorithmic curation can normalize certain future imaginaries through repeated exposure, potentially generating resignation, fatalism, or misplaced confidence—while, under different conditions, it can support learning, participation, and collective sense-making.

Across these levels, the framework treats ecological futures as contested imaginaries shaped by interactions between human communicators, AI systems, platform infrastructures, and institutional actors. It identifies key tensions that sustainability communication must address in AI-dense environments: speed versus reflexivity, accessibility versus oversimplification, personalization versus pluralism, and visibility versus epistemic reliability. The paper concludes by translating the framework into a research agenda, proposing testable propositions and methodological directions (e.g., comparative platform analysis, discourse and visual analysis of AI-assisted content, audit studies of recommender exposure, and audience research on perceived AI authority). Overall, the model offers a clear foundation for examining how AI can both enrich public understanding of ecological futures and distort it through new forms of mediation, selection, and credibility signaling.

SCI01 AI & Environmental Communication

PP 0008 Human vs. virtual greenfluencers: An empirical study on the influence of humanness on pro-environmental behavioral intentions

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Greenfluencers, human and virtual influencers (VI) promoting sustainability through environmental communication on social media, are gaining relevance due to climate change (Groth & Qin, 2025; Lan et al. 2025). Human greenfluencers can positively impact commercial (Breves & Liebers, 2022) and non-commercial contexts (Boerman et al., 2022), while virtual greenfluencers particularly can positively impact commercial contexts (Kim et al., 2023). However, it remains unclear how the effects of human and virtual greenfluencers on pro-environmental behavioral intentions differ in non-commercial contexts.

Whereas social media influencers (SMI), as real humans, clearly exhibit a maximal degree of human likeness, human-like VI (HVI) possess more anthropomorphic characteristics (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021) and a higher degree of realism (Mouritzen et al., 2023) than anime-like VI (AVI), and should therefore be perceived as more human. Increasing influencer humanness is expected to lead to socially richer media experiences (Ahn et al., 2022). This perception should be further enhanced by direct eye contact from the influencer (Shahid et al., 2012). Perceived social richness is assumed to positively influence perceived influencer credibility (Ahn et al., 2022; Go & Sundar, 2019; Munnukka et al., 2022), which, through its persuasive impact, is expected to elicit an increase in recipients' pro-environmental behavioral intentions (Yang et al., 2023). An online experiment was conducted using a 3 (influencer human likeness: SMI vs. HVI vs. AVI) × 2 (influencer eye contact: direct vs. averted) between-subjects design (N = 210). The stimulus was a non-commercial Instagram post whose caption encourages environmentally friendly practices in the fashion context and whose image showed one of the three influencer types with either averted or direct gaze. The manipulation of human likeness (SMI vs. HVI: $p < .001$; HVI vs. AVI: $p = .023$) and eye contact ($p < .001$) was successful. All measures had a reliability of *Cronbach's* $\alpha > .70$. Results of a moderated serial mediation analysis (Hayes, 2022) revealed negative interaction effects between influencer human likeness and influencer eye contact (SMI vs. HVI: $b = -1.086$, $p = .024$; HVI vs. AVI: $b = -1.439$, $p = .004$). When influencer eye contact was not considered, influencer human likeness significantly predicted perceived social richness (SMI vs. HVI: $b = 2.535$, $p < .001$; HVI vs. AVI: $b = 1.889$, $p = .016$). Perceived social richness significantly predicted perceived influencer credibility ($b = 0.492$, $p < .001$), which, in turn, did not have a significant effect on pro-environmental behavioral intentions ($b = 0.037$, $p = .635$).

In an additional moderation analysis (Hayes, 2022), no significant interaction effects were found between influencer human likeness and prior experience with virtual humans (SMI vs. HVI: $b = 0.053$, $p = .754$; HVI vs. AVI: $b = 0.038$, $p = .832$).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that it is not the different degrees of influencer human likeness, but rather the perceived social richness of the influencers, that is central to non-commercial greenfluencer marketing. Persuasive effects observed in commercial greenfluencer marketing cannot be readily transferred to non-commercial content and call for further research on relevant underlying mechanisms.

SCI01 AI & Environmental Communication

PP 0009 De-anthropomorphizing generative AI: How negated and mechanical language affect public perceptions of ChatGPT

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Since the public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022, academic and societal attention for generative AI (GenAI) has increased significantly (Ryazanov et al., 2024). Although generative AI models merely predict text based on statistical probabilities, media and public discourse frequently describe them using anthropomorphic language: the models 'think', 'feel', 'reason', and so on (Cheng et al., 2024). Research in science communication suggests that such framing may enhance comprehensibility (McGellin et al., 2021), but it also risks causing the public to wrongly perceive these models as autonomous, trustworthy, or even moral agents (Placani, 2024). This, in turn, may not only affect acceptance of GenAI but also how people trust, use, or hold these systems accountable (Salles et al., 2020; Singh, 2024).

In response to these concerns, scholars and science communication practitioners have called for avoiding anthropomorphic language in communication about (Gen)AI (e.g., Barrow, 2024; Shanahan, 2024) and instead use mechanical terminology (e.g., 'process', 'generate'; Inie et al., 2024) or stress that GenAI does *not* have human-like characteristics ('Language models do not have personal experiences'; Abercombie et al., 2023, p. 4776). However, previous research has shown that mechanical language and explicit negations may not always have the intended effect (e.g., Bullock et al., 2019; Maciuszek & Polczyk, 2017).

Despite calls to avoid anthropomorphic language in descriptions of GenAI, little is known about how alternative strategies, such as mechanical descriptions or explicit negations, affect public perceptions of it. This study addresses this gap by investigating the effects of these two de-anthropomorphization strategies on public perceptions of GenAI. In an online between-subjects experiment (N = 475), participants read a fictitious newspaper article about ChatGPT containing either anthropomorphic language, negated anthropomorphic language, or non-anthropomorphic mechanical language. They then reported their perceptions and attitudes toward AI systems such as ChatGPT.

Results show that negated anthropomorphic language, but not mechanical language, reduced perceived humanlikeness and trust in GenAI compared to anthropomorphic descriptions. No differences were found between the conditions for other variables including perceived ease of use, general attitudes, behavioral intention, and AI anxiety. Participants generally expressed positive attitudes towards GenAI, yet they also indicated to be afraid that AI will take over jobs or get out of control, despite not perceiving the systems themselves as intimidating. These findings suggest that public perceptions of GenAI are largely resilient to linguistic de-anthropomorphization strategies, highlighting the limits of current recommendations for responsible AI communication.

SCI01 AI & Environmental Communication

PP 0010 Implicit and explicit anthropomorphism of generative AI models in news coverage: A qualitative analysis

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Communicative or generative artificial intelligence (ComAI) refers to systems designed to simulate human communication and interaction. Since the release of ChatGPT and comparable chatbots, public engagement with such tools has increased dramatically, driven in part by their strikingly human-like quality. Users frequently attribute human characteristics, emotions, or intentions to these nonhuman entities; this 'anthropomorphization' can serve as a heuristic that both provides and produces orientation in ambiguous or complex environments (Epley et al., 2007).

In public discourse, journalists tend to anthropomorphize ComAI when reporting on the technology, using human-like descriptions to make complex systems more accessible (Tandoc et al., 2025). Such representations shape public debates and contribute to specific societal imaginaries. Quantitative framing analyses demonstrate that AI-anthropomorphism is a wide-spread phenomenon (Ryazanov et al., 2024; Tandoc et al., 2025). However, anthropomorphic portrayals have many variations, ranging from simple agency attributions (e.g., "When asked, the AI admits its own mistakes") to complex depictions of overarching masterplans ("AI could wipe out humanity, much like pandemics or nuclear weapons"). We argue that these nuances, alongside evaluations and contexts, play a crucial role for shaping public discourse about ComAI and

provide audiences with symbolic resources for meaning-making. While Brokensha and Conradie (2021) offer a qualitative content analysis of AI technology more broadly, a systematic examination of ComAI anthropomorphism is still lacking.

Our study addresses this gap by offering an in-depth qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) of ComAI anthropomorphism in German news media. We use a starting sample of *n* = 100 articles from 13 German print news outlets published between November 2022 (the launch of ChatGPT) and July 2024, and continue sampling until theoretical saturation is reached. Initial coding is guided by a heuristic definition of anthropomorphism, which is iteratively refined as the analysis progresses, and categories are developed.

Analysis is still ongoing, but preliminary results show that ComAI is partly constructed through established AI frames as well as frames that appear unique to ComAI. The analysis also reveals that explicit anthropomorphism (linguistically or visually recognizable depictions of AI as human) is frequently accompanied by more implicit forms, which are not stated directly but emerge through semantic cues with the reporting.

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SCI02 Polarisation, Partisanship, Evidence Politics, and Contested Credibility in Climate Science Communication

PN 09 Mapping obstruction through coalitions: A relational, contextual, and scalable way to explore polarisation, partisanship, and evidence practices in energy debates

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Just as climate change is entrenched as a deeply politicised and polarising topic, so too is Australia's renewable energy transition. Once-bipartisan energy policy is divided along party lines, with conservative politicians and aligned actors advocating for nuclear energy while the incumbent Labor government continues rolling out renewables, despite pushback from some quarters. Some concerns are legitimate, particularly from regional communities hosting infrastructure, while others – though plausible at face value – can be traced to actors with histories of obstructing climate action. Compounding this confusion is evidence politics. Technical reports and energy system modelling are selectively deployed to support particular positions, while the inherent complexity of both the topic and the evidence makes science communication by experts and information verification by audiences challenging. It is this complexity that calls for an approach beyond assessing individual claims alone, and instead expanding the focus to understand who is saying what, in collaboration with whom, and how. Discourse coalition research has examined how diverse actors align around shared policy positions. Yet two challenges remain: scaling discourse analysis to large corpora, and understanding how shared evidence practices – beyond shared storylines – contribute to coalition formation. This study extends discourse coalition analysis by introducing LLM-Assisted Discourse Analysis: a human-in-the-loop approach that enables systematic large-scale analysis while examining evidence sources as a coordination mechanism in contested energy policy debates. Analysing 858 public submissions to Australia's 2024–25 Parliamentary Inquiry into Nuclear Energy Generation, I work with Anthropic's Claude to identify actors, actor types, policy stances, claims, evidence cited, and how that evidence is framed. Coalition structure is then mapped using social network analysis: actors cluster when sharing stances, claims, or citing similar authorities. Preliminary analysis reveals polarised coalition structures reflecting Australia's energy partisanship, with pro-nuclear actors distinct from pro-renewables actors, and these positions relate to fossil fuel and climate change stances (pro-nuclear is aligned with mixed and anti-climate stances, while pro-renewables is aligned with pro-climate). The pro-nuclear coalition includes a conservative fossil fuel-supporting politician, partisan think tank, and pro-mining business actors that have previously been associated with Australian climate policy obstruction. Distinct evidence practices are emerging: The same scientific government report is simultaneously treated as authoritative by one coalition (pro-renewables) and dismissed as unreliable by another (pro-nuclear): a pattern of selective credibility that points to group membership and political alignment. Furthermore, actors with oppositional or mixed attitudes to climate change and/or renewables, or mixed or supportive attitudes to fossil fuels and/or nuclear are more than twice as likely to use the claim "Energy policy needs to be based on appropriate evidence", understood as a delegitimisation of the current evidence base. Shifting the analytical lens to examining with whom actors align (stances and shared storylines) and how they mobilise evidence is useful for understanding complex

policy discussions where climate obstruction may be more nuanced. By mapping discursive alignments and evidence use, we can explore where division occurs, which discourse coalitions are relevant to further investigate, and consider the implications of evidence partisanship in context-dependent debates.

SCI02 Polarisation, Partisanship, Evidence Politics, and Contested Credibility in Climate Science Communication

PN 10 How the news makes the case: Evidence use in polarised climate reporting

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Journalism plays a crucial role in the climate crisis not only in informing audiences, but also in shaping how knowledge claims are justified, contested, and rendered credible. Yet climate journalism operates within highly polarised environments, where disagreements about action, science, and social movements are amplified by partisan politics and divergent editorial stances. This paper examines news polarisation at the level of justification for claims in climate change reporting. While prior research has documented ideological bias, framing, and issue polarisation in climate news (e.g., Feldman et al., 2017; Hase et al., 2021), little is known about how different forms of evidence and argumentation are mobilised. This is an important dimension of polarisation not only over political position, but epistemology: what counts fundamentally as authoritative evidence within different communities. In practice, justification choices are guided by competing considerations of pragmatics, norms and expectations. Certain evidence may carry unwanted associations—like countering emotional stories with legal reasoning—while opposing sources may be selected to fulfil objectivity norms. We take a non-discriminatory approach to studying justification, drawing on Toulmin's framework for argumentation drawing on rhetoric studies as well as literature on expertise and evidence from sociology (e.g., Porter & Espeland, 2023). We analyse climate reporting across 22 Australian media outlets with national reach, covering November 2023 to August 2024. The sample includes mainstream and public service outlets such as The Guardian Australia, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), and Sky News Australia, alongside fringe and alternative outlets including Green Left and Quadrant. We draw on manually-coded data (K-α >.70) from a larger coding project, where coders first identified relevant articles then coded all mentioned actors and all climate-relevant political positions and claims. Each claim had accompanying expressions of emotions, value statements and justifications coded. Coders sorted justifications into one of seven types: (1) research/scientific evidence, such as reports from research organisations; (2) law and regulation, such as direct citation; (3) expert opinion, such as comment from individual experts or representative bodies; (4) statistics without attribution; (5) analogy, such as comparison to precedent cases or examples; (6) morality and ethics; and (7) personal experience. Results reveal significant differences in justificatory repertoires across outlets. Public service and progressive outlets such as The Guardian, ABC, and Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) predominantly rely on research-based evidence and expert authority to support climate-related positions and claims. These choices represent low-risk alignments for their audiences, as these sources are frequently widely-trusted public service organisations themselves. In contrast, conservative and populist outlets—most notably the Herald Sun—rely more heavily on personal experience and anecdotal justification. Alternative right-wing outlet Quadrant uses analogies comparatively often, more than others and also most compared to other types, potentially drawing together disparate discourses more frequently than other reporting. These patterns suggest that epistemic polarisation in climate communication operates not only through competing frames or narratives, but through systematically different standards of credibility which are motivated by fundamentally different aims. Such divergences have important implications for public trust, epistemic polarisation and democratic deliberation.

SCI02 Polarisation, Partisanship, Evidence Politics, and Contested Credibility in Climate Science Communication

PN 11 Polarised public trust in climate scientists: Predictors and correlates in 68 countries

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In many countries, different parts of the public have conflicting opinions on climate change. These conflicts have been conceptualised against the backdrop of affective, ideological, and factual polarisation, where different social groups oppose each other as they do not share the same beliefs and values, and reject those of others. These groups typically differ across sociodemographic characteristics, political views, and media use. Societies worldwide were also found to be polarised on whether scientists are trustworthy sources of knowledge about climate change. However, the evidence on polarised trust in climate scientists is limited: There is little research on demographic and attitudinal "cleavages" between trustful and distrustful segments of the population. In addition, few studies have analysed non-Western contexts. This study is one of the first to provide worldwide, comparative evidence on the drivers of polarised perceptions of climate scientists' trustworthiness. It draws on the publicly available TISP dataset (Mede et al., 2025), a preregistered, quota-sampled, post-hoc weighted online survey (2022–2023) with 71,922 respondents in 68 countries. We analysed 13 potential predictors and

correlates of climate change-related polarisation, including demographic characteristics, sociopolitical views, and information sources. Overall, we find that the majority of respondents trust climate scientists (55%). People in several East-Asian nations (e.g., India) report particularly strong trust, whereas many Latin American (e.g., Bolivia) and some African countries (e.g., Botswana) show less trust. Our results suggest that the most important driver of polarised trust in climate scientists is populism: Trustworthiness perceptions are relatively sharply split between those who support and those who reject science-related populist attitudes (b = -0.17***). We also identify slight religious vs. secular (b = -0.09***), left-leaning vs. right-leaning (b = -0.07***), and liberal vs conservative cleavages (b = -0.07***). News media use (b = 0.09***) and personal conversations about science (b = 0.09***) also tend to polarise societies into more and less trustful segments. However, contrary to common concerns, use of social media and messaging apps has little capacity to explain polarisation. Demographic characteristics are also less informative predictors of polarisation, with the exception of formal education (b = 0.07***).Multilevel models show noteworthy patterns and variations across countries. For example, we find substantial polarisation between age groups in some countries, such as the United States, Australia, Nicaragua, and Peru, where young people—often described as the "climate generation"—have clearly more trust than older cohorts. Notably, religious polarisation is stronger in Muslim-majority countries and also in Israel. Political cleavages are especially pronounced in many European countries. Social media, messaging apps, and personal conversations with peers outside the Internet do not seem to cause much polarisation, but there are a few exceptions (e.g., United States, Turkey, Australia).Future scholarship will need to investigate the predictive value of further sociocultural cleavages (e.g., GAL-TAN), interrogate further origins (e.g., with news media analyses), and explore further components of climate-related polarisation (e.g., attitudes toward environmental policies). Research and practice will also need to work towards effective strategies to depolarise public perceptions of climate scientists.

SCI02 Polarisation, Partisanship, Evidence Politics, and Contested Credibility in Climate Science Communication

PN 12 The impact of argument exposure and perceived argument strength on affective polarisation between climate action supporters and opponents

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Research problem

Effects of political cross-cuttingness—i.e., exposure to political views that differ from one's own—are a central topic in the field of political communication. At the core of this line of research lies the question of whether exposure to political disagreement positively or negatively affects democratically desirable outcomes, such as political participation, knowledge, or tolerance towards others (Mutz, 2006). Our study is situated within this tradition. We focus on supporters and opponents of stricter climate action, who are regularly publicly portrayed as divided into antagonistic camps, and examine the potential of argumentative cross-cuttingness, i.e., exposure to counter-attitudinal justifications, to reduce affective polarisation. Affective polarisation refers to the (increasing) rejection of members of an out-group alongside a (more) positive evaluation of one's own in-group, which can be driven, e.g., by an increasing aversion, negative feelings, and resentment towards an out-group. The literature offers competing expectations: cross-cutting exposure has the potential to increase mutual understanding and out-group favorability, but can also reinforce group identities and rejection of the opposing group, especially among individuals with strong or extreme attitudes. This can be explained by the perceived threat that cross-cutting exposure poses to one's in-group and is especially likely when cross-cuttingness occurs in the form of attacks against an in-group (Mason, 2016). Our study, however, focuses on political cross-cutting in terms of exposure to counter-arguments and therefore expects a reduction in affective polarisation. Additionally, the possibility of a reverse causal relationship has not yet been examined—that is, that affective polarisation may also affect the frequency of exposure to counter-attitudinal arguments. Strong rejection of an out-group may, for example, lead to avoidance of corresponding arguments (Slater, 2007).

Method

We analyse data from three-wave online panel surveys fielded by YouGov in the United States, Spain, and Germany in 2024, with approximately six-week intervals (overall NW1 = 4,706; NW2 = 3,622; NW3 = 2,654). In each wave, respondents reported exposure to five pro and five contra arguments about stricter climate change mitigation measures and evaluated their perceived strength. Affective polarisation was operationalised as the absolute difference between favorability ratings of the climate-policy in-group and out-group. We estimated fixed-effects regression models with time-varying controls and complemented them with random-intercept cross-lagged panel models.

Findings

Across all three countries, counter-attitudinal argument exposure is associated with lower affective polarisation, whereas pro-attitudinal exposure is associated with higher affective polarisation. However and importantly, changes in polarisation are driven more by perceived argument strength than by exposure frequency alone. Cross-lagged models furthermore suggest reciprocal processes: exposure can reduce polarisation, and polarisation can affect later exposure patterns. Our

findings imply that reducing affective polarisation in climate change mitigation debates may depend less on increasing cross-cutting exposure but rather on fostering engagement with substantively convincing arguments.

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SCI02 Polarisation, Partisanship, Evidence Politics, and Contested Credibility in Climate Science Communication

PP 0338 The permeance of objectivity? Mapping audience evaluations of the advocacy role in climate journalism

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Climate journalists play an important role in the climate crisis; they are the primary source of climate information for most audiences, and they impact how people perceive and act on the climate crisis. At the same time, traditional journalistic roles and norms, such as objectivity, are being revisited, and the advocacy role in climate journalism is being debated by practitioners and academics alike. Given that the general public consumes most of their climate information through news media, it is remarkable how unexplored the audience perspective is within these debates. Hence, we set out to understand how Dutch citizens evaluate the advocacy role in climate journalism.

We address this, firstly, by offering a stronger conceptualization for the advocacy role, specifically when reporting on climate solutions. Secondly, we address this through six focus groups with Dutch citizens (N = 24). These focus groups were segmented by climate concern, and participants partook in a card sorting exercise with fragments from a fictional newspaper article. Each fragment contained one message characteristic, which we stipulated from the aforementioned conceptualization, to identify whether a journalistic product may have been, implicitly or explicitly, written out of the advocacy role.

The data was collected in October 2025, and the data analysis will be completed by early 2026. However, we already observe some preliminary results. Firstly, we observe that participants across different levels of climate concern expected objective, value-free, and independent reporting. Balance and nuance were hoped-for by many; climate skeptical participants, for example, expected journalists to also include scientists that do not represent the scientific consensus. Opinions were tolerated in columns, but most agreed that opinions did not have a place in mainstream news reporting. Moreover, and in terms of climate solutions, several participants wanted journalists to present course(s) of action, but some recognized the persisting need of, first and foremost, communicating the problem of climate change. Lastly, several participants discussed the pluri-crises (including mis/disinformation) that characterize the current geopolitical landscape, the difficulty for journalists to balance urgency and avoid fearmongering, and whether phrases such as 'climate crisis' are losing their weight.

Based on these preliminary results, it is notable that audiences still uphold traditional views on journalism, largely expecting journalists to provide objective, balanced, and nuanced accounts. Despite struggling to define what this might look like in practice, it seems that the desirability of objectivity permeates audience as well as journalistic discourses. Moreover, it is worth considering whether this emphasis on objectivity and independence may be heightened by the audiences' worries around pluri-crises, and whether these are seen as proxies to safeguard the epistemic authority of, and trust in, journalists.

Ultimately, this paper offers a threefold contribution. We present a (1) conceptual contribution by better demarcating the advocacy role when reporting on climate solutions, and an (2) empirical contribution by exploring how audiences evaluate news coverage that is written out of this advocacy role. Understanding audiences' receptivity towards this role, also offers a (3) practical contribution for newsrooms that may be reconsidering their position in this era of climate action.

SCI03 Energy & The Green Transition

PP 0222 How interactivity and immersion of visualizations affect the acceptance of and the participation in wind energy projects

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The global imperative for sustainable energy solutions has significantly propelled the development and deployment of wind energy projects. However, local acceptance and citizen participation remain critical determinants of their successful implementation (Liebe et al., 2017). Visualizations of planned wind energy projects are increasingly recognized as vital tools in addressing citizens' concerns about visual, acoustic, and ecological impacts, thus promoting acceptance. Interactive techniques and immersive tools are expected to enhance participatory planning by presenting detailed site information

and enabling feedback mechanisms (Berry & Higgs, 2012; Cranmer et al., 2020; Teisl et al., 2018). This effect is mainly due to interactive and immersive presentation of objects and services, which creates positive experiences that translate into more favorable opinions and behaviors toward them (Grigorovici, 2003). Prior research has often conflated interactivity and immersion without exploring their individual effects, treating interactivity as a feature of immersion (Berry & Higgs, 2012). The present study addresses this gap by experimentally separating the individual effects of interactivity and immersion on acceptance of and participation in a wind energy project. Our research questions are as follows:

RQ1: How does the degree of a) interactivity and b) immersion affect participants' acceptance of a wind energy project?
RQ2: How does the degree of a) interactivity and b) immersion affect participants' willingness to participate in a wind energy project?

Method

We conducted an online experiment with 1,235 participants representative of the German population in terms of gender (49% female), age (M = 49.1, SD = 15.2), and federal states, with 57% living in rural areas.

Participants first completed an online questionnaire assessing attitudes toward different forms of energy production. They were then randomly assigned to one of the online informational materials about a local wind energy project. They were instructed to imagine themselves as citizens of a neighboring community and to explore the wind park information freely. The websites were manipulated in a 2 x 2 between-subjects design: interactivity (interactive-non-interactive) and immersion (immersive-non-immersive). Interactive versions allowed participants to engage with features such as revealing noise and shadow impacts. Immersive versions presented realistic 3D visualizations of the local landscape and 3D models of the wind turbines, compared to abstract maps in the non-immersive condition. All environments presented the same information related to the project. After navigating the information environments, participants completed another questionnaire measuring acceptance, and willingness to participate in the wind energy project.

Results

- Two ANCOVAs were conducted, each controlling for attitudes toward onshore wind energy. Participants showed higher acceptance in interactive compared to non-interactive environments, while immersion did not significantly affect acceptance (F(1, 1231) = 14.75, p < .001).
- Furtermore, interactivity yielded a significant positive effect on willingness to participate (F(1, 1231) = 15.48, p < .001), whereas immersion showed no significant impact. No interaction effects emerged in any of the analyses.
- The findings suggest that, in contrast to immersive presentation, interactivity in informational materials increases acceptance (RQ1) and willingness to participate (RQ2) in local wind energy projects. Hence, participatory planning processes should prioritize interactive information materials as an effective measure to promote public acceptance and citizen participation.

SCI03 Energy & The Green Transition

PP 0223 The rising support for nuclear energy in Norway: Media framing, public opinion, and political debate

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Despite concerns over nuclear accidents, costs, and waste disposal issues, support for nuclear energy is rising in Norway and is covered in the media.

Several factors may help explain this public climate. Norway's push for renewable energy faces conflicts over wind farm locations is leading to greater interest in alternatives. Public debate mentions that municipalities are rejecting industry proposing opening new business out of fear of future electricity shortages. The perceived risks of nuclear energy have faded since Fukushima, while the EU's classification of nuclear as a sustainable energy source has bolstered its legitimacy. Growing climate concerns and the framing of nuclear as a "green" alternative have further increased acceptance. Meanwhile, the nuclear lobby in Norway, especially the company Norsk Kjernekraft (NK) is working persistently to promote a positive perception of the technology. Both public opinion and media coverage reflect this shift.

We ask: What clues can media coverage provide about the rising public support for nuclear energy and its potential resurgence in Norway?

We conducted a quantitative media content analysis of three media: NRK (public service broadcaster), Aftenposten (national legacy media), and Klassekampen (left-leaning national newspaper), January 2021-September 2025. We manually sampled articles with strong focus on nuclear energy (>50%), resulting in n = 211, NRK n = 38, Aftenposten n = 82, Klassekampen n = 91. We used ChatGPT v5 for coding gain and loss frames. We developed and tested a ChatGPT-prompt and reached sufficient intercoder reliability (above 80% for most variables, above 70% for a few, averaging 86% agreement) compared to a human coder across 19 articles.

We observe differences between the media. NRK uses the societal gain frame (74%) as well as other countries investing in nuclear energy (74%) the most, and more than Aftenposten and Klassekampen. Aftenposten uses the international frame (57%) and the benefits for the environment frame (55%) frequently. Klassekampen often frames the issue through a safety

frame (58%) and has a strong focus on other countries investing (52%). When it comes to possible loss to the environment, an important aspect of nuclear energy, this frame is overall the least used frame, however, NRK does give this frame quite substantial attention (47%).

The company NK is directly quoted in ~30% of Aftenposten and NRK articles, which reach a large audience (NRK ranks #1, Aftenposten #7). In Klassekampen, NK receives less airtime (11%). Generally, the gain frames are more prevalent when the profit-driven company NK is quoted.

Findings suggest that the media frames to some degree are influenced by NK's work. We conclude that the publicly funded NRK and high standing Aftenposten are influenced by economic interests when they cover nuclear energy. Whether this has led to the positive opinion climate in Norway is impossible to conclude here, however, we do see that the positive tone found in representative surveys is present in the media coverage as well. Not surprisingly, the left-leaning Klassekampen shows a different picture, which likely helps strengthen the opinion of those against nuclear energy.

SCI03 Energy & The Green Transition

PP 0224 From green growth to degrowth – from progress to loss: How news media relate environmental crises and economic growth

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A main cause for global environmental crises, such as climate change or the loss of biodiversity, is that contemporary societies overexploit natural resources. This directly links environmental crises to our economic system which is built on the principle of continuous growth. While some have argued that to preserve habitable environments, economic growth should be limited (e.g., Hickel & Kallis, 2020), others argue that with different choices and future scientific developments economic growth and environmental preservation could very well be compatible (see Smulders et al., 2014). Although this may be very much a scientific debate, the societal debate is not the be neglected. Public debates as reflected in the news media are a key source of information for citizens and political decision making. Moreover, especially for issues that lack a scientific consensus, journalists play a vital role as gatekeepers in granting visibility to an issue and selecting issue positions (Rosen et al., 2016). While ample research has explored public opinion on this topic (e.g., Drews et al., 2018; Kenny, 2021), thus far, research that aims to understand how the compatibility of economic growth and environmental protection is represented in the news media is scarce: limited to US news media (Stecula & Merkley, 2019) or focusing on more narrowly defined topics such as degrowth (Sagvosdkin, 2025).

The interrelationship between environmental and economic developments can be considered as an example topic to study how loss is anticipated, avoided, neglected, and negotiated in public discourses (Reckwitz, 2024). While progress narratives dominate modern thought, casting change as inherent improvement, this framework tends to negate the experience of loss. At the same time, environmental (and other) crises generate loss. And while the dominance of the growth paradigm emphasizes progress, it further intensifies environmental loss. This duality gives rise to questions about social practices around loss—ranging from denial to fixation, and from denial to cultural rituals around processing loss. The current study examines this duality in the context of the interlinkage between the environment and the economy with the following research questions:

RQ1 To what extent and how do the news media frame news about the relationship between the economy and the environment along the continuum of loss and progress?
RQ2 Which actors and topics are related to these frames?
RQ3 Which losses and progresses are framed as legitimate?
RQ4 To what extent and how does this differ between news media across countries and across the political spectrum of news outlets?

To answer these research questions a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of national media coverage linking environmental and economic topics is conducted comparing across three countries (Australia, Germany, the Netherlands). First, a qualitative analysis based on a corpus of 60 news articles per country, spread over three newspapers per country, deductively identifies key loss and progress frames and linked actors. Based on these findings, a codebook is developed for a manual, quantitative content analysis of relevant news articles published in 2025 to compare the frames across countries and news outlets.

SCI03 Energy & The Green Transition

PP 0225 Smokescreen or climate solution? Negotiating carbon capture in the press

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Aim & scope

Carbon capture is increasingly presented by IGOs, such as the IPCC (Shukla et al., 2022), and national governments as necessary to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. In Denmark, the technology is a crucial element in achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 (Danish Climate Act, 2020). By promising not only to capture CO2 emissions but also convert CO2 into green energy (through Power-to-X technologies), it has become the "holy grail" of climate mitigation. At the same time, CCUS remains controversial. NGOs such as Friends of the Earth view CCUS as a technofix with significant environmental and local community risks.

The media serves as a key platform for public understanding of climate-mitigating technologies. This study explores how Danish news media inform and discuss capture, storage, and utilisation of carbon dioxide (CCUS).

Theoretical background

While the literature on public negotiations of CCUS is expanding (Nielsen et al., 2022), it mostly aligns with the "public acceptance of technology" perspective (Arning et al., 2019). Experimental survey designs, for instance, have shown that public knowledge of CCUS is limited (Zuch & Ladenburg, 2023).

We situate our study within the public acceptance approach. However, we step back and examine public *negotiations* of CCUS *prior to* any public acceptance (Batel & Devine-Wright, 2015). Thus, we contend that public attitudes are preceded by a period of public negotiation in which different technologies, actors, and issues are presented and debated.

Research design

To investigate how CCUS is negotiated in Danish news media, we ask:

RQ1: How, when, and where did CCUS emerge on the news agenda?
RQ2: What are the dominant themes and issues associated with CCUS?
RQ3: How are support and criticism of CCUS articulated in the press?

The analysis combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. First, we use text mining to trace the emergence and development of the CCUS agenda from 1997–2025 (n = 15101). We then focus on recent developments (2019–2025). Based on a purpose sample (n = 102), we investigate four media platforms (national dailies, public service corporations, regional news, and trade news). Timeline analysis, word clouds, and open coding constitute our main analytical tools.

We aim to update "ethnographic content analysis" (Altheide, 1987, 1996) by integrating it with digital tools (NVivo) to ensure an inductive approach grounded in systematic coding protocols.

Findings

Our coding process has resulted in a significant number of codes (n = 22) and sub-codes (n = 96), which are relatively evenly distributed across time and media platforms. We present the major patterns emerging from the coding.

Timeline analyses show that media coverage of CCUS is driven by Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets, which have become a key instrument in climate policy. It indicates that the media adopt official narratives about CCUS as inevitable, although some reports criticise it for sustaining fossil-fuel technologies rather than systemic decarbonisation.

Discussion

Based on our findings, we discuss whether media language is hyperbolic regarding CCUS, thereby contributing to a "promotional discourse" (Nerlich et al., 2024), and whether the media disregards historical lessons from previous immature techno-solutions to the climate crisis.

SCI03 Energy & The Green Transition

PP 0226 Museums in the age of the ecological crisis: How petrostates construct the future

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Museums, as well-established institutions, are uniquely positioned to connect historical trajectories with the climate emergency and to help the public make more informed choices as consumers, citizens, and activists (Cameron et al., 2013; Janes, 2024). They can interrogate deeply entrenched and often problematic assumptions about economic growth and prosperity and facilitate transitions towards more sustainable energy sources. Despite this potential, however, many museums remain reluctant to address the systems underpinning the ecological crisis (Isager et al., 2021; Baker, 2023). This reluctance is

evident in exhibitions envisioning the planet's future in countries with significant petroleum reserves, which form the focus of this study.

This paper adopts a social constructionist paradigm and draws on discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007). Using qualitative discourse-theoretical analysis, it examines how the Climate House, part of the Natural History Museum at the University of Oslo, and the Museum of the Future in Dubai recreate, reconfigure, or omit particular environmental discourses in their forecasting practices, and how they construct notions of accountability and change.

Despite markedly different political and welfare regimes, both Norway and the United Arab Emirates have accumulated substantial national wealth through oil and gas extraction. This shared material foundation is approached in divergent ways within their exhibition spaces. The Norwegian case explicitly acknowledges the country's reliance on hydrocarbons and foregrounds community-oriented responses through chains of equivalence linking individual and collective actions, articulated through a discourse of stewardship and hopeful narratives of humanity's capacity to unite and adapt. By contrast, the Emirati exhibition leaves its reliance on hydrocarbons largely unexplored, instead advancing a narrative of expansionism through extraterrestrial endeavours, set against a backdrop of mass extinction ultimately framed as solvable through innovation. Both institutions' nodal points stabilise anthropocentric, optimistic future imaginaries while marginalising structural critiques of capitalism and fossil-fuel dependence.

These findings point to a broader tendency in contemporary museum practice to avoid reflexive confrontation with business-as-usual logics and instead opt for neutrality and spectacle. Drawing on scholarship advocating the long-term and equitable management of natural resources, this paper argues that museums could enrich their discursive fields by introducing counter-hegemonic imaginaries and ecocentric perspectives, and by more directly engaging with the transformations required to render net-zero emissions scenarios thinkable.

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SCI04 Framing & Reporting The Environment

PP 0329 Comparing constructive news on the environment from across languages and cultures: An MCDA-based case study of Positive News (UK) and EnPositivo (Spain)

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This study of constructive environmental news from different linguacultures combines (constructive) journalism studies and multilingual, multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) to continue and extend an existing preliminary study (Riggs 2025) that explored only the coverage of *sustainability* in constructive news from *Positive News* (UK) and *En Positivo* (Spain).

The pressing environmental issues of our time transcend borders and are therefore a major focus of (constructive) news globally. The presence, types and impact of constructive environmental news in different countries have often been explored (e.g., Lough 2025; Lough & McIntyre 2021), and constructive environmental news has been shown to motivate readers to take action (e.g., Maduneme & Cohen 2024; Said & Wölfl 2025), reflecting alternative "norms, values…ethics" (CFP) to those of predominant "if-it-bleeds-it-leads news". These are worthy of further consideration given the need for news to not only "contribute to meaningful societal progress" (CFP), but also draw and maintain audiences.

What is rarely taken into account, however, is that (constructive environmental) news is re-presented, mediated, across different linguacultures (exceptions are Riggs 2024, 2025; Riggs & Davier 2025). Few studies of constructive news investigate the nuts and bolts of the *language* used to describe environmental issues and solutions to them, the interplay of language and image in such coverage, and how these may *vary* according to linguaculture (the micro-/meso-level).

Furthermore, on a macro-level, depending on where such news comes from, it may emphasise mitigation over adaptation or vice-versa; individuals' power to help preserve the environment or the responsibility of large and powerful economic and political actors in degrading the environment; it may or may not engage with the larger question of whether capitalism and environmental protection/preservation are in fact mutually exclusive (Baer 2012; Thier & Wu 2024).

This study will combine thematic content analysis with examination of information (de)selection, use of sources, congruence/dissonance/personalization/depersonalisation between topic and image, the presence, absence or transformation of

stylistic features such as metaphor (including visual/multimodal metaphor; e.g., El Refaie 2003; Forceville 2016), alliteration, modality, and register (including presence/absence of interpellation [e.g., Althusser]), to confirm, refute, or nuance findings from the preliminary study, for instance:

On the micro-/meso-level, *EnPositivo* added content to make texts more explicitly about sustainability; used less verbal metaphor but more visual metaphor than *Positive News*, and a much more formal register, creating distance and didacticism, whereas *Positive News* combined wordplay, alliteration and interpellation to lower the register and establish proximity with readers, and lightheartedness;

On the macro-level, *EnPositivo* defined andproblematized environmental issues more and was more critical of the capitalist model and the "big players" who hinder sustainability, while *Positive News* focused more on economic development and consumption; both emphasised the role of technology in sustainability. Sources in *Positive News* were more often founders of companies, marketing representatives; in *EnPositivo*, institutional/scientific documentation, community representatives and organisers. *Positive News* was more UK-focused with *EnPositivo* instead reporting on Spain, the EU, Latin-America and beyond.

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SCI04 Framing & Reporting The Environment

PP 0330 Framing planetary health: A systematic analysis of framing concepts in environmental and health communication research

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The accelerating degradation of planetary systems and the global rise of health challenges have led to the development of a new interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research field, planetary health. This emerging field of research, seeking to understand interconnections between environment and health, shows an increasing interest in communicative practices addressing these intertwined crises of human health and ecological sustainability. Within this growing body of literature, framing has emerged as a dominant theoretical approach, serving as a lens through which researchers analyze and interpret complex relationships and processes. Yet, despite its prevalence, significant conceptual ambiguity persists regarding how environmental and health-related frames are defined, categorized, and applied, particularly in topic-specific contexts. This lack of standardization hinders comparability and cumulative knowledge development.

This study presents findings from a content analysis of 57 scholarly publications selected from a larger preregistered scoping review (N = 213, 2009–2023) on planetary health communication. Focusing on studies that explicitly use framing as a primary theoretical framework, the research examines how environmental and health-related frames are employed, defined, and operationalized. The study addresses three research questions: (RQ1) What types of frames – generic or issue-specific – are most commonly used? (RQ2) How are frames related to environment and health defined? (RQ3) How are these planetary health-related frames distributed across research domains and methods?

A mixed-methods content analysis was conducted using a codebook adapted from climate change communication research. Variables included theoretical tradition, frame development, frame types, focus of analysis, framing effects, frame materials, and frame names, particularly those linking environment and health. Open coding enabled inductive identification of new frame concepts.

Two trained coders tested the codebook on a 30% pretest sample (n = 17), achieving substantial agreement (ICR ≥ 0.75) for five variables and excellent agreement (ICR ≥ 0.83) for the remaining two after a third training, confirming high reliability. The full coding of the 57 studies has been completed and the data analysis is now underway.

Preliminary results show that 67% of studies draw on a sociological tradition, with 51% analyzing media content frames and 45% focusing on audience frames. Notably, 74% use issue-specific frames, and 44% explicitly identify planetary health-related frames, commonly labeled as "public health" or "health" frames, but also more specifically as, e.g., "air pollution", "water quality", or "heat-related" frames. Furthermore, it appears that environmental and health frames are often analyzed as unrelated or even contradictory (environment vs. public health).

The findings are expected to reveal a fragmented use of framing theory, with varying definitions and applications of planetary health-related frames. This fragmentation limits the field's ability to build cumulative knowledge and effectively communicate the interconnected nature of environmental and health crises.

The study makes two key contributions: first, it offers a systematic overview of framing's application in planetary health communication; second, by clarifying definitions and improving coding instruments, the study supports the development of more robust frameworks for future interdisciplinary research. Ultimately, the study advances the theoretical foundations of planetary health communication, thereby enhancing public understanding and engagement with planetary health.

SCI04 Framing & Reporting The Environment

PP 0331 Who gets to speak for the forest? Discursive power in media framing of the Church of Sweden's Forestry inquiry Kristina Riegert and Ida Wallin

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Forests are increasingly central to climate change mitigation, intensifying political and public interest in Sweden's forest governance and sparking polarized debates about sustainability and societal values. This study examines media coverage of the Church of Sweden's forestry inquiry—a landmark initiative by one of Sweden's largest private forest owners to align management with ecological, economic, social, and spiritual sustainability. Published in 2024, the inquiry proposed halving clear-cutting, introducing close-to-nature forestry on one-third of holdings, and expanding protected areas to 20%. These recommendations challenged Sweden's dominant forestry model, triggering extensive debate during the public consultation (Oct 2024–Feb 2025) and influencing church elections in Sept 2025, where green coalitions gained ground.

We ask: (1) What dominant frames emerged from the media debates about the Church of Sweden's forestry inquiry? (2) Which actors gained discursive power, and how were they represented?

The study draws on Hjarvard, Mortensen, and Eskjær' study (2015) of the dynamics of mediatized conflicts—amplification, framing and performative agency, and co-structuring—we analyze how media act as conduits, shape conflict environments, and influence outcomes. We also use Jungherr et al.'s (2019) concept of discursive power in hybrid media systems referring to the ability to "introduce, amplify and maintain topics…and dominate attention in ongoing political discourse."

Using framing analysis (Benford & Snow 2000), we examined diagnostic frames and prognostic frames and actor standing (frequency, placement, direct quotes) in 82 articles across local, regional, specialist, and national press and public service media during the consultation period. Three major agenda-setting frames emerged, each dominant at different times:

Moral-Ecological-Climate Frame (Oct–Dec): Led by some church leaders, environmental NGOs, Sámi actors, and activists, emphasizing biodiversity, FPIC, and spiritual sustainability. This coalition supported the inquiry's recommendations and initially dominated coverage.

Economic-Operational-Scientific Risk Frame (Jan-Feb): The Church Joint Property Board (ENSO) and diocesan representatives commissioned analyses predicting severe revenue losses, questioning the science, and opposing centralization. Industry-oriented outlets (e.g., ATL), regional/local and some religious press amplified this frame.

Procedural-Legitimacy Frame (Late Jan–Feb): Bishops and the author of the inquiry criticized "remiss sabotage," and climate urgency, reframing the debate around governance and legitimacy.

In February, the moral-ecology-climate and the economic-operational-risk frames existed side by side, leading to news pegs discussing ethics and intra-church maneuvering. These shifts underscore how the media co-constitute and are instrumentalized in conflicts through amplification and performative interventions (commissioning alternative analyses, redefining the stakes, leaked email exchanges). The shifts in discursive power reveal how the media enable particular interests to shape what the conflict is about - a polarization that continued after this period and played a major role in the Church election. Understanding these dynamics is vital for fostering deliberative spaces in sustainability discussions and mitigating polarizing effects of mediatized conflicts.

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SCI04 Framing & Reporting The Environment

PP 0332 The discursive constructions of nature and culture in Swedish environmental journalistic assemblages

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Research on environmental journalism predominantly follows a critical or scientific perspective, examining Swedish environmental journalism as part of a Western, liberal media system characterized by institutional autonomy and media power. In contrast, this paper focuses on the examination of the discursive construction of nature and culture, highlighting their entanglement in Swedish environmental journalistic assemblages. Drawing on the analysis of articulations, the research gauges entanglement as a constitutive form of situatedness, corroborating the call to examine environmental journalism "as a complex, interactive societal process" (Corbett, 2015, p. 288) – also explained as a necessary first step, for "its capacity to respond" (Haraway, 2016, p. 78).

Supporting this research, the role and relevance of relations between the particular and the universal is argued from the poststructuralist and post-Marxist discourse theory on identity and the political (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). New materialist writings, including DeLanda's (2016) conceptualization of assemblage theory and a particular interest in 'natureculture' – conceptualized by Donna Haraway (2003) – complement the theoretical framework. The study employs qualitative methods to investigate the discursive construction of nature and culture by their hegemonic and counterhegemonic articulations, or the lack thereof, as seen by the collection of 180 textual and audiovisual media materials in Swedish public service, private media, and independent collaborative networks, published 2020–2025, and selected the diversity criteria (Van Cuilenburg, 2000), alongside 20 +/- interviews with environmental journalists and editors. The application of discourse theoretical analysis (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007) through the explanatory discursive-material knot (Carpentier, 2017) approach highlights how the entangled articulations are not only (re)constructed but also resisted.

The main research question is: How are nature and culture articulated in the Swedish environmental journalistic assemblage of public service, private media, and independent collaborative networks? Specifically, the study examines 1) how hegemony and counter-hegemony are articulated in the material; 2) how the materials articulate gaps/limitations; 3) subgroup differences; and 4) what the examination of secondary research questions explains about the discursive construction of nature and culture. In the paper, which focuses on hegemonic and counterhegemonic articulations, gaps, and differences in the media material, the analysis demonstrates how hegemonic tactics to categorize and prioritize nature and culture include "resources," "needs," and "progress." The media material also demonstrates the presence of resistance in the material, further highlighting the environmental journalistic assemblages' capacity to respond to both nature and culture. Counterhegemonic articulations highlight, on the one hand, identification and self-realization, as tactics of "being nature"; and on the other hand, extend space and self-awareness into tactics of "becoming nature", revealing their limits. Meanwhile, counterhegemonic articulations in the material include entanglements of articulations that are also "ignoring nature and culture", arguing for the continued address of relations in Swedish environmental journalistic assemblages.

SCI04 Framing & Reporting The Environment

PP 0333 TV broadcasting of the 2024 floods in Valencia, Spain: How the regional Public Media Service reported the relation between science and politics in a polarized system

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On 29 October 2024, torrential rain caused by an isolated low-pressure area at high levels brought over a year's worth of precipitation to several areas in eastern Spain, with Valencia as the most damaged territory. The resulting floodwaters caused the deaths of about 237 people and substantial property damage, turning them into one of the deadliest natural disasters in European history.

The crisis management has been the subject of harsh criticism ever since, while the ongoing judicial investigation advances aiming to determine criminal and civil liability. The contentious relationship between the right-wing political parties that hold regional power and the left-wing parties governing at the national level has made this crisis a constant topic of news coverage and political confrontation.

This heated debate has also brought scientific actors into the public discussion. Extreme rainfall events are becoming more frequent in the Mediterranean region due to climate change, where sea temperatures are steadily rising, affecting weather patterns. While "cold drop" episodes are common along the Mediterranean coast, the scale of this event exceeded all expectations and had tragic consequences.

Given the impactful outcomes of the floods, media attention was huge within the Spanish news landscape. This paper is exclusively focused on the coverage of À Punt, the regional TV channel of the Autonomous Community of Valencia, given its pivotal role in the media system closer to the most damaged area. On this occasion, the corporation was recognized by various professional associations for its prompt response and leadership during the catastrophe.

A quantitative content analysis of 984 news stories aired by À Punt between 29 October and 31 December was conducted, devoting special attention to the thematic agenda and to the framing strategy presented in this long-term approach to the natural disaster and its subsequent crisis management. Concurrently, the study reviews the management of information sources, placing special emphasis on the contribution of scientific experts.

The initial findings point towards a prevalence of human-interest frames where individual protagonists were leading the news pieces during the first weeks. This humanitarian approach was slowly replaced by a growing presence of the political confrontation: once the harder impacts were digested, the evaluation of the crisis management turned into the main topic, trying to find out the causes lying behind the severe consequences.

The role played by scientists in the coverage was carefully analysed, placing a special focus on how their presence and contributions interacted with the political leaders' discourse. The intimate connection between climate change, global warming and some extreme weather events counts with a solid ground within the scientific community, but it is easy to turn into a subject for political confrontation, mainly when parties with a sceptic discourse emerge in the institutional arena.

The divergent positions of political parties in the current Spanish field of play led to significant clashes between scientific and political arguments.

SCI05 Climate Journalism

PP 0334 Constructing constructive climate coverage Audience views on current climate journalism and paths forward

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The grim outlook of climate change makes it difficult for journalists to retain the attention of readers, viewers and listeners when covering the subject. Among those who "often" or "always" actively try to avoid climate change news frequently mentioned reasons are that this news coverage affects their mood negatively, that they feel powerless to do something with the information, and that they are overloaded with climate change news.

It has been suggested that shifting the reporting on climate change in a more constructive direction could be an effective way of engaging media users and enhance their sense of efficacy, and the constructive reporting style has gained traction among climate journalists worldwide. So far, however, the evidence of the proposed beneficial effects is inconclusive when they are studied through controlled experiments. This calls for studies that more granularly explore how audiences negotiate the potential of constructive climate coverage founded on discussions about how the media currently handle climate change. Gaining such an understanding will help researchers in carefully designing studies that explore the potential effects of constructive climate coverage more in line with the actual audience expectations and practices, and it will inform climate journalists on how they can balance their reporting to these audience expectations and practices.

Drawing on 13 focus groups with a diverse sample of Danish members of the public (N = 68) in terms of age, educational level and climate attitude, this study takes an audience perspective to examine the prospect of emphasizing solutions in the framing of climate stories.

The focus group participants generally agreed that contemporary climate journalism is excessively negative and wedded to doomsday narratives. Accordingly, there was a widespread wish for a more constructive approach in climate reporting. Unpacking the specifics of this demand, the discussions revealed that the participants particularly wanted climate journalism to center more on what individuals can do to mitigate the climate crisis, rather than on responses at the systemic or technological level. It speaks to the substantial proportion of climate news avoiders that indicate that they feel that there is not much they can do with the information that they get from climate change news.

Additionally, the finding that readers, viewers, and listeners prefer constructive climate journalism to revolve around micro-level actions contrasts with scholarly views of constructive journalism as exclusively concerned with structural matters. Our bottom-up design can spark debate on whether definitions of constructive climate journalism are sufficiently attuned to audience inclinations. Lastly, our observations can help inform journalistic work by pointing out the shortcomings of contemporary climate journalism and outlining future trajectories.

SCI05 Climate Journalism

PP 0335 Decoupling net zero from climate change: A new form of policy obstructionism in the UK media

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Context

Recent academic research strongly suggests that many of those groups opposed to taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are shifting the emphasis from questioning climate science ('trend', 'attribution' or 'impact' scepticism) to questioning climate policy ('response scepticism'). In the UK, for several years sections of the media strongly challenged the scientific consensus on climate change. However, more recently these same outlets regularly question the UK's net zero target and the policies aimed at achieving it.

In October 2024 the leader of the Conservative party, Kemi Badenoch, declared herself to be a 'net zero sceptic' but not a climate change sceptic, thus cementing a difference between a belief in the reality of climate change and a belief in the advisability of net zero policies, or in other words 'decoupling' climate change from net zero. Such a position is problematic in that climate change cannot be stopped without reaching net zero, a fact established by the IPCC.

This study was designed to assess whether a similar process of decoupling net zero from climate change is taking place in parts of the UK media.

Method

We used the Factiva search engine to examine coverage of Net Zero in the nine main UK legacy print media with an online presence from 2018 to 2024. First, we identified the number of articles mentioning net zero at least once (73,000 articles), then those having Net Zero once in the headline and at least twice in the article, and finally, those with Net Zero in the

headline and at least four other mentions. We used a complex array of Boolean search terms such as [atleast3 “net zero”] AND [hd=“net zero”], then [atleast3 “net zero”] AND [hd=“net zero”] AND [“climate” OR “climate change” OR “climate crisis” OR “climate emergency” OR “global warming” OR “global heating”], then [atleast3 “net zero”] AND [hd=“net zero”] NOT [“climate” OR “climate change” OR “climate crisis” OR “climate emergency” OR “global warming” OR “global heating”]. We also selected a limited number of articles for qualitative assessment.

Results

Amongst our findings are:

- In 2018, 90% of articles mentioning net zero also included the phrase ‘climate change’ or similar. By 2024, this figure had fallen to just 42%.
- Over the same period, 100% of all the article with three mentions of net zero also mentioned climate change. That dropped to 75% in 2022 and to 59% in 2024.
- The downward trend is particularly noticeable in the right-leaning media (Telegraph, Express, Sun).

Societal importance

Polling evidence in the UK and elsewhere suggests strong public support for tackling climate change, but confusion and lack of understanding over Net Zero policies. We discuss if certain papers or editors are driving an agenda to divide climate change (an issue that the public greatly care about) from net zero (its solution, which is less understood). And we make recommendations for how journalists can improve their coverage of the net zero target.

SCI05 Climate Journalism

PP 0336 Mediating climate knowledge: How Finnish climate experts assess their relationship with the media and policy-making

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While public trust in science and expertise remains relatively strong in Europe, epistemic institutions—such as universities, research institutes and journalism—are increasingly challenged in their capacity to support the epistemic infrastructure of democratic decision-making. This paper focuses on a fundamental systemic challenge of climate change, examining the relationship between climate experts, political decision-making and the media. We provide an empirical case that addresses the crisis tendencies affecting the epistemic capacities in European societies.

Previous studies on the mediation of climate science have focused on the production routines and practices of climate journalism, its discursive or visual content, and audience interpretations of and reactions to climate change communication (e.g. Schäfer & Painter 2021; Holmes & Richardson 2020). However, there is detailed research on what climate experts think about their relationships with the hybrid mediated public sphere and the political decision-making networks they aim to inform (Kunelius et al. 2017). Contributing to this topic, we offer a theoretically informed and contextually anchored analysis of how Finnish climate experts understand, evaluate, and manage their relationships with the media and mediated politics in the current context of major transformations in media ecosystems and political conditions (Wetts et al. 2025).

The paper draws on 35 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2025 with a diverse range of climate researchers (from geophysicists to social scientists and economists) as well as climate experts working in the private sector, government, and non-governmental organizations. We asked questions regarding a) their perceptions of the news media and their communication activities and strategies, b) their practices as experts in communicating with different policy stakeholders and the public, and c) their approaches to negotiating the role of an expert within the current epistemic ecology.

The paper offers evidence on:

1) how climate experts’ relationships with the media and social media have changed,
2) what kind of strategies and criteria they use to navigate the new technopolitical media landscape, and
3) how they assess the changing political environment, where public debates are increasingly polarized and framed by national interests.

By discussing these findings, the paper provides fresh insights into the experiences of climate experts in an era where pressing environmental crises intersect with a changing political and media landscape.

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SCI05 Climate Journalism

PP 0337 Meta coverage in news reporting on UN-Climate Change Conferences

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Climate change constitutes one of the most consequential and conflict-laden issues of contemporary societies. Public understandings of climate governance rely heavily on mediated communication, which makes journalism a central arena in which meanings, responsibilities, and possible responses to climate change are negotiated. Communication scholarship has long emphasized that critically observing public discourse—and media coverage in particular—can contribute to shaping democratic debate on environmental issues. This paper focuses on a specific, yet understudied phenomenon within climate journalism: meta coverage.

Meta coverage refers to news reporting that does not only address events, actors, or policies, but explicitly makes communication itself visible, observable, or evaluable. This includes references to media coverage and journalistic practices, to the communicative strategies of political and societal actors, and to communication as part of political processes. While meta coverage has been extensively studied in contexts such as election campaigns and war reporting, its role in climate journalism—and particularly in the reporting on international climate negotiations—has received little systematic attention.

The paper examines meta coverage in news reporting on the United Nations Climate Change Conferences (COPs), which represent highly mediatized global political events. During the COPs, national delegations, civil society organizations, business actors, scientists, and journalists converge in an intense communicative environment. Negotiations are accompanied by strategic public communication, symbolic acts, media performances, and contestation over visibility, legitimacy, and influence. As a result, COPs provide a particularly suitable case for studying how journalism reflects on communication itself as part of global climate governance.

Building on this framework, the study addresses two guiding research questions: *(RQ1)* To what extent and in which forms does meta coverage occur in news reporting on the UN Climate Change Conferences?*(RQ2)* How do news media, in their meta coverage, refer to and evaluate (a) media and social media communication, (b) the communicative practices of relevant actors, and (c) communication as part of the COP process itself?

Empirically, the study develops and applies a quantitative content-analytic instrument to capture meta coverage in COP reporting. Meta coverage is defined strictly as explicit references to communication, distinguishing three dimensions: (1) references to media and social media communication, including journalism, platforms, and public debate; (2) references to communicative efforts of political, economic, civil society, and expert actors related to the COPs; and (3) references to communication at the COP itself, encompassing the communicative structure of the summit, negotiation processes, outcomes, symbolic and ritualized aspects, organizational performance, and disruptions.

The instrument further differentiates evaluative patterns, capturing whether communication is framed as neutral information transmission, as strategic or tactical action, or as normatively accountable communication. COP-specific categories assess how negotiation processes, outcomes, conflict dynamics, inclusion and exclusion, ritual symbolism, organizational communication, and interference events are framed. The analysis is applied to the reporting on the 30th UN Climate Change Conference in Belém (Brazil) 2025 in leading national quality newspapers with agenda-setting functions in their respective media systems in the Germany (Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung), Italy (Corriere della Sera, La Repubblica), the Netherlands (de Volkskrant, NRC) and the United States (The New York Times, The Washington Post).

SCI06 AI & Science Communication

PP 0451 Designing SciComAI: Applying value-sensitive design to an AI chatbot for science communication

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Artificial intelligence (AI) opens up new avenues for science communication but also privileges particular practices, representations and “ways of knowing” over others, with the values guiding these AI-mediated interactions often remaining opaque (Klein-Avraham et al., 2024). Although attention to AI’s impact on the content, practices, and outcomes of science communication is growing (Kessler et al., 2025), less is known about how AI design itself shapes the conditions of science communication.

This contribution approaches science communication with AI as a design challenge (Kalmár & Stenfert, 2020) and examines how AI reflects – and can be made to reflect – normative orientations in science communication. It presents the design process of a science communication chatbot using Value Sensitive Design (VSD), a methodological framework meant to ensure that technologies reflect stakeholder priorities (Friedman & Hendry 2019; Sadek et al. 2024). The process was guided by four questions: (1) Who is directly or indirectly affected by AI in science communication? (2) Which values do these technologies support, contest, or transform? (3) How do practices evolve as AI becomes embedded in science communication? and (4) What systemic effects may emerge?

Following VSD's tripartite logic, the process started with a conceptual phase that consolidated quality principles for science communication with AI, followed by an empirical phase that combined a representative survey of audience expectations of AI-mediated science communication (*N* = 1,500) with qualitative interviews and observations of chatbot users (*N* = 50); and analyses of interaction protocols from an early prototype. The ongoing technological phase translates these findings into design requirements for the chatbot's interface, dialogue structure, and quality safeguards. The resulting prototype integrates two functions: a dialogue mode supporting interactive engagement with scientific topics, and a generation mode that produces outputs while enabling reflection on communicative choices such as tone, framing, certainty, or complexity. In this way, the interactions become an opportunity for reflective practice, making value trade-offs in science communication visible and open to deliberation.

The VSD lens has revealed how AI-mediated science communication involves a multiplicity of stakeholders and further blurs the boundaries between producers and audiences (Taddicken & Krämer, 2021). Scientists, press officers, journalists, policymakers, and citizens alike become potential users of a technology that itself takes on the role of a communicative agent in science communication (Hepp et al., 2023; Guzman & Lewis, 2020), while distinct value tensions emerge, for instance, between accuracy and accessibility, or personalization and objectivity (Silva Luna et al., 2025). Treating these tensions as design challenges allows their negotiation within AI applications for science communication, showing how communication research can not only analyse but also shape technological change.

SCI06 AI & Science Communication

PP 0452 Stop pushing junk science! User corrections of misinformation in science are common and advanced

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Previous research on misinformation has largely concentrated on obvious falsehoods from dubious sources, paying little attention to a potentially more significant mechanism of misleading the public: the accidental publication of inaccurate information by trusted and popular epistemic authorities (see van der Linden & Kyrychenko, 2024). Consequently, we still lack a solid understanding of how science – frequently presented as the opposite of misinformation – can sometimes contribute to damaging public misperceptions (Motta & Stecula, 2021; Swire-Thompson & Lazer, 2022; West & Bergstrom, 2021). To address this gap, the present paper examines how social media users engage with and contest what we call *misinformation in science*: unreliable research rejected by relevant experts for violating scientific integrity. Using an observational research design, the study provides much-needed evidence of user corrections 'in the wild' (Bode et al., 2024), showing that real-world correction practices closely mirror established experimental recommendations.

As an empirical case, we revisit the controversy surrounding the off-label use of ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine as COVID-19 treatments, selecting 12 retracted articles touting these drugs that have been widely circulated despite their serious flaws. We introduce a novel mixed-methods procedure through which we collected approximately 33,730 posts and 13,743 replies on Twitter referencing these unreliable research papers (early 2020 through late 2022) and analysed them using a combination of quantitative, qualitative and computational text analysis techniques to quantify the acceptance of misinformation in science as well as explore the strategies to combat it.

Our findings show that, while most posters uncritically accepted retracted findings, corrections to these posts were also common, accounting for almost half of all replies. These corrections were also overwhelmingly detailed, neutrally expressed, and nuanced with most users employing at least one widely recommended debunking strategy. In contrast, we found little evidence of polarising or needlessly convoluted language which are discouraged in experimental literature. While these insights are limited to a single platform and a context specific to the pandemic, the findings highlight the significant role that ordinary users play in countering unreliable science, and point to the need for researchers and policymakers to provide stronger support for bottom-up corrective practices.

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SCI06 AI & Science Communication

PP 0453 Different AI realities? Segmenting science communicators, intermediaries and audiences across the Swiss science communication ecosystem

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Rationale

Artificial intelligence (AI) will be transformative for science communication, influencing both the production of science-related content (Guenther et al., 2025) and its accessibility (Greussing et al., 2025). While prior research documents AI-related attitudes, literacy, and use among individual groups, such as citizens (Bao et al., 2022) or professionals (Henke, 2025), empirical work remains fragmented. Consequently, we lack a systematic understanding of how AI-related attitudes align or diverge across the science communication ecosystem and what such patterns imply for the production, intermediation, and reception of scientific information.

Addressing this gap, we apply a segmentation approach (AUTHORS, 2021) to the science communication ecosystem as a whole. Drawing on the tripartite model of attitudes (Ajzen, 1989), we examine AI-related **cognitive, affective, and behavioral** dimensions across six actor groups in Switzerland: (1) professional science communicators, (2) scientists, (3) Wikipedians, (4) science content creators, (5) science journalists, and (6) citizens.

RQ1: Which segments emerge across the Swiss science communication ecosystem based on AI-related cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions?

RQ2: How are these actor groups distributed across the identified segments?

Data

We draw on large-scale, multilingual, national surveys conducted between November 2025 and March 2026. Participants are recruited via institutional and professional networks, mailing lists, social media snowball sampling, and third-party survey providers. At the time of submission, the study is undergoing preregistration, and the authors have not accessed the data. The study includes 2000 respondents from the general population and at least 250 participants in most additional actor groups, with smaller samples anticipated for science journalists and science content creators, resulting in an expected total sample size of approximately 3000.

Measures and analytical approach

AI-related attitudes are operationalized as follows:

- **cognitive** dimension is measured through *AI literacy*, including subjective self-assessments and objective knowledge-based items drawing on validated instruments (e.g., Henestrosa & Kimmerle, 2024; Klein-Avraham et al., 2025; Wissenschaftsbarometer, 2025).
- **affective** dimension captures *AI-related perceptions, evaluations and perceived impacts* using established multi-item scales adapted from prior research (e.g., Greussing et al., 2025; Sohn & Kwon, 2020; Gillespie et al., 2023).
- **behavioral** dimension is measured through *AI use frequency* and *AI use experience*.

Overall, the segmentation analysis is based on 31 indicators, measured consistently across all groups. To answer **RQ1**, latent class analysis is used to identify homogeneous subgroups characterized by shared patterns of AI-related attitudes.

Actor group membership (e.g., scientists, journalists) is not included in the segmentation itself, but examined in a subsequent step to assess how different groups are distributed across the segments thus answering **RQ2**. Segment profiles are further characterized by sociodemographic and contextual characteristics, including job experience or organization type and size.

Contribution

By moving beyond actor-specific analyses, this study provides an ecosystem-wide map of AI-related attitudes in science communication. It is expected to highlight potential divides between actors (e.g. regarding literacy) that may shape how scientific information is produced, mediated, and received. These insights offer a basis for targeted interventions and provide a conceptual heuristic for comparative and qualitative follow-up research.

SCI06 AI & Science Communication

PP 0454 The role of science media influencers in addressing scientific topics and shaping youth understanding of science journalism in Arab countries

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Since the late 20th century, science journalism has grown in significance on a global scale as a unique area that is vital to the public's understanding of complicated scientific concepts. In many Arab nations, scientific journalism is still rare ,underscoring a significant vacuum in available, trustworthyscience communication. According to research from 2025, there is an increasing number of science media influencers in Egypt, many of whom have tens to hundreds of thousands of followers on social media sites like YouTube and Instagram. These personalities have a significant impact on young audiences, influencing how they view and comprehend scientific subjects. Nevertheless, no analysis has been done on the impact of this content, including its correctness, presentation forms, topic focus, and perceived scientific value.

Subsequently , this study aim to assess the role of science media influencers in the Arab world in addressing scientific topics and their impact on youth's understanding of science journalism. This study also aims to fulfil certain objectives as to analyze the content presented by scientific influencers in the Arab world, Secondly, identify how this content affects Arab youth's understanding, and perception of scientific subjects , thirdly, assess the opinions of scholars and specialists of content disseminated by science media influencers , and fourthly, offer suggestions and for improving influence of science media communication in the Arab world.

This study employs a comprehensive theoretical framework integrating both Framing Theory and the Contextual Model of science communication. Framing Theory contributes by analyzing how science media influencers selectively highlight aspects of scientific topics, where the Contextual Model emphasize the role of audience background, and knowledge in interpreting the framed messages. Influencers in science media who work in scientific journalism make up the analytical universe. thoroughly examined using qualitative content analysis, which provide contextual insights, where five influencer instagram pages are purposefully chosen based on their significance to scientific journalism, follower count that indicates impact, and regular posting frequency. This study focuses on youth aged 18 to 24, a group recognized as significant consumers of scientific journalism. The purposive sample includes both male and female youths who actively follow science media influencers and have a keen interest in scientific topics . Additionally, in-depth interviews will be conducted with academics and experts specializing in science journalism to gather authoritative views on influencers' content quality and impact.

The study covers a three-month period from November 1, 2025, to January 1, 2026, chosen to capture consistent content trends while reflecting the latest developments in science media influence in the Arab world.

SCI07 AI & Climate Change

PP 0563 AI and climate change communication: A systematic literature review

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how climate change is produced, communicated and consumed (Schaefer and Hase, 2023). While generative and language-based tools offer scalable communication opportunities, they also raise concerns around misinformation, methodological limits, and the environmental costs of digital infrastructures. As AI increasingly mediates public understanding of climate change, it is vital to understand how it intersects with climate communication research and practice.

Recent scholarship highlights that AI represents a dual influence on climate communication (Schaefer, 2024). On the one hand, studies indicate that it represents an opportunity to amplify and target climate communication at scale (Bulian et al. 2023; Chen et al., 2024). On the other, research shows that AI presents significant challenges for climate communication in the context of rising mis- and dis-information (King et al., 2023). Despite this, to date studies have not focused specifically on how AI, particularly generative and language-based tools, is conceptualised and debated within climate communication. This PRISMA-guided systematic literature review (Page et al. 2020) addresses that need by investigating how AI has been operationalised in climate communication research and practice.

This paper presents the first systematic and critical review of empirical research at the nexus of AI and climate communication. We examined English-language, peer-reviewed research published from 2020 to 2025, drawn from Scopus, Web of

Science, and ACM. The initial search returned a total of 827 papers which were exported to the Covidence platform. Article titles and abstracts were then double-screened using working definitions of AI, climate change, and climate communication. Research group discussions of conflicting cases produced a corpus of 156 publications. Full text articles were then manually coded via Covidence to guide categorisation and thematic extraction.

Our preliminary findings illuminate several emerging themes in the intersection of AI and climate communication. We identify the dominant AI methodologies currently employed within this multi-disciplinary field and assess the value they contribute to advancing climate-related discourse and engagement. Moreover, we examine the extent to which studies address climate obstruction, particularly through the lenses of misinformation and disinformation, and highlight the geographic distribution of research activity. Our analysis also sheds light on the regions that actively shape the scholarship alongside those that remain underrepresented, whether in terms of authorship or as areas of empirical focus.

Beyond mapping disciplinary and geographic trends, the review examines methodological and theoretical assumptions about climate communication and evaluates whether ethical questions are considered. This is particularly important given the increasing calls for just transitions to post carbon futures as well as growing concern about the environmental impacts of AI. Relatedly, we explore how environmental costs are addressed (or overlooked) and argue for more sustainable and inclusive approaches to AI-facilitated climate communication and engagement.

SCI07 AI & Climate Change

PP 0564 How human-in-the-loop disclosure and lateral reading support shape the effectiveness of LLM-based fact-checking chatbots in climate change misinformation correction

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Climate change misinformation, which is often associated with narratives that question or reject established climate science, poses a critical threat that undermines public understanding and support for climate policies and actions. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) advances, AI systems are increasingly used to detect, evaluate, and correct misinformation. Large language models (LLMs) have further expanded these possibilities by enabling scalable, automated fact-checking through conversational chatbots, which can provide timely corrections and engage users interactively. However, challenges remain regarding public trust in AI-delivered corrections and how to leverage these tools to cultivate users' literacy and verification skills so that correction efforts become more robust. To address these challenges, our study examines how two key design features of fact-checking chatbots—specifically human-in-the-loop (HITL) disclosure and lateral reading support—shape users' perceptions and behaviors during climate change misinformation correction.

LLMs, despite their strong generative and evaluative capabilities, remain prone to factual errors and hallucinations. Human-in-the-loop (HITL) approaches, where humans are actively involved in supervising, validating, or correcting AI system outputs, offer one solution for mitigating these limitations. Yet, while such oversight is often implemented behind the scenes, little is known about whether explicitly disclosing HITL involvement affects user trust and credibility judgements. This gap motivates our examination of the effect of HITL disclosure during fact-checking practices using LLM-based chatbots.

Meanwhile, research has consistently shown that lateral reading, a media literacy strategy that trains individuals to verify information using multiple external sources, can enhance resilience to misinformation by promoting active verification rather than passive acceptance. Embedding features that support lateral reading—such as providing external links or nudges to cross-check information—into chatbot interfaces may guide users toward more deliberate verification, thereby enhancing correcting effectiveness. Importantly, the combination of these two design features may produce interactive effects: while HITL disclosure may increase trust in the system, lateral reading support may prevent over-reliance by keeping users engaged in verification, which will enhance the ultimate correction effectiveness.

This study proposes a 2 (HITL disclosure: present vs. absent) × 2 (lateral reading support: present vs. absent) between-subjects online experiment. Approximately 400 participants will be recruited to evaluate multiple climate-related statements, receive chatbot-guided correction, and complete a questionnaire measuring their trust, perceived credibility, continued use intention, sharing intention, and further verification intention. Theoretically, this study contributes to misinformation research, media literacy, and human-machine communication literature to explain how oversight cues and verification scaffolds jointly shape user responses to machine fact-checking. Practically, the findings provide design insights for developing trustworthy, literacy-enhancing AI tools that strengthen public resilience against climate misinformation.

SCI07 AI & Climate Change

PP 0565 Identifying social norms of (non)compliance with climate measures in alternative and legacy media – An LLM approach

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The climate crisis demands collective action to mitigate its consequences. Social norms, indicating what others do *(descriptive)* and approve of *(injunctive)*, play a key role in coordinating such action (Cialdini et al., 1991; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005; C. R. Schneider & van der Linden, 2023). Yet, recent developments show that counter-movements opposing such mitigation norms have gained visibility in climate discourse (Fairmedia, 2023). As arenas where competing interpretations and values circulate, media and especially alternative outlets play a central role in these norm contests. Alternative media can amplify oppositional voices, challenge mainstream interpretations, and provide visibility to actors and frames that remain marginal in legacy media (Holt et al., 2019). Thus, the present study investigates how alternative and legacy media depict descriptive and injunctive climate-action norms.

This analysis is part of a broader research project examining the role of news media in the formation and dissemination of social norms regarding climate change. Within this project, the current study focuses on a large-scale, AI-assisted content analysis of German-language news coverage, which will later be linked to complementary survey data. Following Li and Klinger (2024), we developed and iteratively refined an in-context learning approach by prompting mainstream large language models (LLMs), specifically GPT models (gpt-4o, gpt-4o-mini, and gpt-5.1), to identify descriptive and injunctive climate norms and related key attributes. The prompt instructed the model to recognize (a) the type of norm (descriptive vs. injunctive), (b) whether the norm addressed mitigation or adaptation to climate change (e.g., emissions reduction vs. preparedness and resilience measures), (c) whether the norm promoted or opposed climate mitigation or adaptation, and (d) the social group to which the norm referred (e.g., political actors). The prompt was optimized following the human-in-the-loop principles and adjusted to improve accuracy and recall including explicit clarifications.

To evaluate model performance, one researcher manually coded 30 articles, and we calculated agreement between human and machine coding at the article-level (i.e., agreement in identifying whether an article contained any norms) and the instance-level (i.e., agreement in identifying specific norms within jointly recognized articles). The highest-performing configuration achieved Cohen's κ above 0.74 for norm type, direction, and topic and customized agreement scores above 0.73 for behavior, social group, and source variables. For automatic assessment, we applied a Hungarian algorithm-based approach that maximizes the overall alignment between machine and human coding (Kuhn et al., 1955).

In the presentation, we will report further details on prompt development and discuss key practical challenges, including identifying the best-performing model. We present an effective LLM prompting protocol for identifying norms in news content using LLMs, which can be adapted to other (crisis-related) topics. This study advances methodological understanding of LLM-assisted content analysis by offering structural guidance for designing, refining, and evaluating prompts for norm detection. The findings will also enhance understanding of how media shape norm formation, highlighting differences between alternative and legacy outlets and offering an important perspective as societies face multiple, overlapping crises requiring collective action.

SCI07 AI & Climate Change

PP 0566 Public perceptions of generative AI and climate change: Media trust, platforms, and coverage evaluations across eight countries

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The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how societies approach complex global challenges, including climate change. Critics warn that growth in AI may place new pressures on energy systems through rising electricity demand from data centres, but it is also possible that AI could support mitigation and adaptation efforts, for example by optimising renewable energy systems or improving climate modelling and forecasting. These competing narratives position generative AI simultaneously as a potential climate solution and an emerging environmental risk. News media are therefore likely to play a central role in shaping how the public interprets the relationship between AI and climate change. This paper examines how public perceptions of generative AI's impact on tackling climate change are associated with platform-specific news exposure, trust in news media, and evaluations of AI-related news coverage. The analysis draws on original survey data from the UK, US, France, Germany, India, Pakistan, Japan, and Brazil, spanning diverse media systems and political contexts across the Global North and South. The findings show that platform effects are differentiated rather than uniform: exposure to television news and social media are each independently associated with more positive perceptions of generative AI's climate potential. Results also point to significant demographic differences, i.e., men, older respondents, and those with higher levels of education expressing more optimistic views of generative AI's role in addressing climate change, while

political orientation shows weaker and less consistent associations. Notably, once media-related factors and demographics are considered, cross-national differences in public perceptions are relatively limited, with only a small number of countries deviating significantly from the overall pattern. This finding suggests that media evaluations and information environments may play a more central role than national context alone in shaping how the public understands generative AI in the climate domain. The findings also show that public views of generative AI's climate impact are related to views about media performance, with respondents who believe that AI will make climate change worse more likely to evaluate news coverage of the issue negatively. This suggests that people worried about the impact of AI on climate do not think the news media is doing enough to communicate the risks to the public. Overall, this study provides evidence on the crucial issue of public perceptions of generative AI and climate change, highlighting the importance of media in shaping attitudes towards emerging technologies across diverse national contexts.

SCI07 AI & Climate Change

PP 0567 When climate change comes home: Local vs. global framing in AI-assisted disaster simulations

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Climate change is increasingly framed in Western media as a major global threat, yet many audiences still experience it as distant, abstract, and not personally consequential. Construal Level Theory (CLT) predicts that when a threat is perceived as psychologically distant (e.g., spatially or socially), it is processed more abstractly, evokes weaker emotion, and yields lower motivation for action. Building on this perspective, the present study examines whether AI-assisted audiovisual simulations of climate-related disasters can reduce psychological distance, and whether anchoring identical threats in a local (vs. foreign) geographic context intensifies affect, perceived personal relevance, and willingness to act.

We conducted an online experiment with a representative sample of Israelis (N = 402; excluding ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations). Each participant viewed four short (90–130 s) videos depicting climate disasters: (1) a large-scale wildfire in Israel affecting forests, homes, people, and animals; (2) a closely matched wildfire abroad; (3) a tsunami striking Tel Aviv's coastline and urban space, damaging people, property, and infrastructure; and (4) a matched tsunami abroad. Videos were produced with an AI-supported workflow (ChatGPT scripting, Midjourney visuals, Adobe Premiere Pro editing, and Hebrew voiceover via ElevenLabs), while keeping length, editing pace, and narration tone constant to limit confounds. After each video, participants rated fear/anxiety, worry about the future, personal relevance of climate change, and willingness to act on a 1–4 scale (1 = most impactful; 4 = least).

Results show a strong and consistent proximity effect across all outcomes. Scenarios set in Israel were experienced as more impactful than identical scenarios located abroad. Local videos elicited higher fear (wildfire: M = 1.98; tsunami: M = 2.00) than their abroad counterparts (M = 3.02 and M = 3.00, respectively), higher worry (wildfire: M = 1.83; tsunami: M = 1.95) than abroad scenarios (≈ 3.1), and greater willingness to act (local M ≈ 1.61–2.01 vs. abroad M ≈ 3.06–3.32). Demographic patterns indicated women reported higher fear, worry, and action readiness than men; younger adults (18–34) tended to respond more strongly than older participants; and higher education was associated with greater worry and motivation to act. Regionally, participants' responses tracked local risk salience (e.g., stronger reactions to wildfires in fire-prone areas, and to tsunamis among coastal/central residents).

Overall, the findings reinforce CLT's psychological distance mechanism and suggest that vivid, AI-assisted disaster simulations can amplify engagement most effectively when anchored in a local context—translating climate change from an abstract global problem into a personally relevant, action-eliciting threat. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the feasibility of using generative AI to create high-production-value, audience-tailored climate-risk communication stimuli at reasonable cost and speed.

SCI08 Framing Climate Change

PP 0675 Between healing and tampering: how metaphorical framing shapes public attitudes toward emerging climate solutions

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The urgency of global warming and limited progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions have increased interest in potential solutions such as large scale carbon dioxide removal (CDR) approaches (Boettcher et al., 2021). One emerging approach is ocean alkalinity enhancement (OAE), which involves adding large quantities of alkaline substances to seawater to increase pH and, in principle, enhance the ocean's capacity to absorb CO_2 from the atmosphere (Cooley et al., 2023). Despite growing research, investment, and pilot testing by both researchers and commercial parties, substantial uncertainties remain regarding OAE's effectiveness and ecological risks.

Public familiarity with OAE is currently low (Cox et al., 2020), yet available evidence suggests it is often perceived as risky (Nawaz et al., 2023; Satterfield et al., 2023). Recent public opposition to a proposed UK field trial that was ultimately cancelled illustrates these concerns (Waller et al., 2025).

For complex and unfamiliar technologies such as OAE, early attitudes are especially susceptible to influence by media and scientific communication, as prior knowledge is limited and opinions are not yet well formed (Raimi, 2021). Climate technology discourse frequently relies on metaphors and analogies that map unfamiliar technological processes onto more familiar domains (Bellamy & Raimi, 2020; Castree, 2020). Such frames function as cognitive shortcuts (Sopory & Dillard, 2002) that activate semantic associations and affective states that influence reasoning and judgement (Ottati et al., 2014).

A prominent example is the anthropomorphic 'planet-as-patient' frame, which portrays the earth as sick and climate interventions as a form of medicine (Nerlich & Jaspal, 2012; Luokkanen et al., 2013). Analogies to 'natural' processes are also common and have been shown to increase support for emerging climate technologies (Corner & Pidgeon, 2015). Such analogies might feed into a larger 'natural is better' bias, suggesting that a thing is good because it is presented as 'natural'. Such frames can divert attention from uncertainty and potential risks, increasing the likelihood of delayed public backlash.

Beyond framing, message source credibility plays a key role in shaping responses to contested technologies (Siegrist, 2000; Druckman, 2001). Research on CDR suggests that messages attributed to scientists are received more favorably than those from commercial actors (Cummings et al., 2017). We therefore examine how metaphorical frames interact with source attribution and with individual differences in aversion to tampering with nature (Raimi et al., 2020), a moral value orientation known to predict opposition to emerging technologies.

Using a 3 (conventional medicine vs. 'natural' medicine vs. literal frame) × 2 (scientist vs. for-profit source) between-subjects design, a nationally representative sample of United Kingdom residents (N = 890) was randomly assigned to read one of six versions of a realistic online news article about OAE. Attitudes, affective responses, perceived risks and benefits, and overall support were analyzed using regression models testing main effects and interactions, including a three-way interaction with aversion to tampering with nature. Findings will be presented at the ECREA conference. Overall, results of this study add to the current literature on responsible and transparent science communication strategies for the early stages of contested technology development.

SCI08 Framing Climate Change

PP 0676 Framing climate migration across borders: A comparative analysis of news coverage in seven countries

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Climate change increasingly reshapes patterns of human mobility. While the direct causal relationship between climate change and migration remains debated (Ghosh & Orchiston, 2022), climate-related migration is discussed and experienced within broader patterns of climate injustice, disproportionately affecting marginalized communities and poorer countries (Shivanna, 2022; Roosvall & Tegelberg, 2018; Mukhongo, 2024).

Public understandings of climate migration are mediated through news coverage, which has increasingly taken up the issue in recent years (Bonneux & van Praag, 2024; Demata, 2017; Munoz, 2024). How news media frame climate migration is central, particularly for an emerging issue where public attitudes and policy positions are still fluid (Druckman & Leeper, 2012). Despite its growing relevance, research on climate migration framing remains limited. Existing studies are mostly qualitative, focus on single countries or outlets, and rarely examine framing dynamics over longer periods or across global contexts (e.g. Bonneux & van Praag, 2024; Farbotko, 2005). This paper addresses these gaps through a comparative, longitudinal analysis of climate migration framing in news media, combining qualitative frame identification with large-scale automated content analysis.

Drawing on Entman's (1993) framing concept and issue linkage (Liu et al., 2016), we examine how climate migration is framed in relation to established discourses of climate change and migration. We analyze 4,811 news articles published between 1988 and 2025 in seven countries: Mexico, India, Bangladesh, South Africa, Australia, Germany, United States. We analyze (RQ1) how climate migration is framed over time, (RQ2) how it is discursively linked to climate change and migration, and (RQ3) how these framings differ between Global North and Global South contexts.

The study identifies climate migration frames using a deductive-inductive approach. Building on existing literature on migration, and climate change framing, a deductive set of frames was refined through qualitative analysis of a stratified sample of articles. This resulted in the identification of ten climate migration frames consistently present across countries and over time. These include frames adapted from refugee and climate change coverage, as well as hybrid frames specific to climate migration. We apply a large-scale quantitative content analysis to trace the prevalence and evolution of these frames over time and across countries. Using large language models, articles are automatically coded for frames and key contextual variables, with validation against manual coding.

Preliminary results based on a stratified 10% subsample (n = 480) show that frames emphasizing legal status, human suffering, and climate justice dominate climate migration coverage and have increased in prominence over time, whereas

benefit frames remain rare. In terms of issue linkage, climate migration is more frequently connected to climate change (56.3%), than to migration discourse (23.2%). Initial cross-national comparisons indicate systematic differences between Global North and Global South media in frame emphasis and responsibility attribution.

By combining qualitative frame reconstruction with scalable LLM-based analysis, this study demonstrates how automated methods can be used to analyze long-term, cross-national framing dynamics, while better explaining our understanding of climate migration.

SCI08 Framing Climate Change

PP 0677 Framing ecological crisis and health: Media discourses on climate change and biodiversity loss in Spanish newspapers

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The current global socio-economic model, based on continuous growth, extractivism, and overproduction, has generated a multidimensional ecological crisis, manifested in climate change, biodiversity loss, and widespread environmental degradation. Research increasingly highlights that these processes have direct and indirect consequences for human health, ranging from heat-related morbidity and extreme weather events to food insecurity, zoonotic diseases, and mental health impacts. Despite the growing relevance of this eco-social health nexus, previous studies suggest that media coverage often addresses environmental and health issues in fragmented ways, limiting public understanding of their structural interconnections.

This paper examines how Spanish newspapers construct and communicate the health impacts of the ecological crisis, with a specific focus on climate change and biodiversity loss, and how these issues are framed in relation to the dominant socio-economic model. Drawing on perspectives from critical political ecology and environmental communication, the study explores the presence of ideological biases, dominant frames, and discursive silences in media representations of ecological determinants of health.

Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed qualitative approach combining quantitative content analysis, framing analysis, and elements of critical discourse analysis. The empirical material comprises news articles published between April 1, 2024, and January 26, 2025, in general-interest newspapers with different ideological orientations (El País, elDiario.es, El Mundo, and El Confidencial) as well as in newspapers specialized in health journalism (Redacción Médica and Diario Médico). Using a constructed-week sampling strategy through the MyNews database, the analysis identified 64 news articles explicitly focused on climate change in headlines or subheadings, alongside a smaller number addressing biodiversity loss, reflecting its lower media visibility. Articles were coded using an analytical framework assessing references to health impacts, anthropogenic causes, socio-economic drivers, and proposed solutions.

The results reveal significant asymmetries in media coverage. Climate change is relatively visible in progressive newspapers but largely absent from specialized health outlets. Biodiversity loss is even more marginalized, appearing almost exclusively in progressive newspapers and rarely framed as a structural environmental determinant of health. Moreover, the predominant media frame is focused on problem definition and environmental consequences or political conflict (almost 50% of the news analyzed). Across the climate change related articles, only 32% explicitly refers to health impacts, and just 34% acknowledge the anthropogenic origins of climate change. Across all media types, explicit critiques of the dominant socio-economic model are scarce, with coverage predominantly emphasizing technical or adaptive solutions while avoiding discussions of growth, extractivism, or structural transformation.

These findings suggest that prevailing media framings contribute to the depoliticization of the relationship between ecological crisis and health, limiting the visibility of eco social justice perspectives and alternative socio-economic approaches to the actual economic model. This study serves as an initial exploration of how the ecological and health crises are publicly constructed in Spanish media and can provide a foundation for future research on the public framing of ecological health issues, supporting more integrative and critical media approaches to environmental health challenges.

SCI08 Framing Climate Change

PP 0678 Transformational climate adaptation: A dialogical sense-making study

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As climate change impacts intensify, international negotiations increasingly emphasise how to enable and support societal adaptation. In recent years, the concept of transformational adaptation has gained prominence in climate diplomacy (UNFCCC, 2024). Transformative change goes beyond technical and other practical solutions for adapting societies to a changing climate, also calling attention to changes in structures and views (IPBES, 2024; Linnér and Wibeck, 2019). Yet, interpretations of transformational adaptation remain contested with no clear consensus among policymakers and researchers.

This paper examines how different actors make sense of the concept of transformational adaptation and the opportunities and challenges it actualises. We explore whether this concept can provide a new constructive avenue in the climate change negotiations, asking: Does transformational adaptation offer the potential to build common ground that advances climate action, or will it become a buzzword that reinforces existing divides? The paper explores how diverse actors interpret the rationale, scope, and implementation of transformational adaptation, and its potential role in shaping future climate diplomacy.

Our analysis draws on in-depth interviews with delegates and observers at the international climate negotiations, and analysis of relevant policy documents, including UNFCCC negotiation texts and countries' national adaptation plans. These data are complemented by free-text responses from the International Negotiations Survey (n = 575) (https://liu.se/en/research/international-negotiations-survey) collected at COP30 in Belém, November 2025, and its preceding intercessional meeting in Bonn, June 2025.

Starting from dialogical communication theory and its focus on contextuality, interaction, and other-orientation (e.g., Bakhtin, 1986; Linell, 2009; Marková et al., 2007), we employ dialogical sense-making analysis (Wibeck and Linnér, 2021) to explore the various meanings key actors ascribe to the 'transformational adaptation' concept. We pay attention to the content as well as the processes of sense-making, specifically scrutinising how the use of metaphors, categorisation, prototypical examples, stories, and frames contribute to constructing and maintaining meanings.

This research contributes to studies of science and environment communication by advancing the analysis of sense-making processes. Specifically, we pay attention to aspects of power and communicative asymmetries in how different actors privilege certain interpretations of transformational adaptation while overlooking or downplaying others. By tracing how meaning is negotiated, stabilised, and contested, the study sheds light on the political dynamics that shape the uptake of emerging concepts in climate diplomacy.

Transformational adaptation could potentially be a game-changer for climate diplomacy. However, the concept might also add to existing conflict lines. In mapping differences and commonalities in sense-making, this paper contributes to identifying conflicts and ways forward for climate adaptation.

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SCI08 Framing Climate Change

PP 0679 Playful participation on climate-related citizen processes: A qualitative analysis of the Citizen's Assembly for Climate of Catalonia

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The aim of this presentation is to reflect on the design and implementation of participatory processes related to climate sensitization from the lenses of playfulness (Hautopp and Norgaard, 2017), through the notion of 'playful participation'.

Despite the relevant presence of participation in deliberation processes around key societal topics, such as climate change, a series of potential problems can limit their impact. Some of them have their origins in a superficial understanding and limited implementation of participation. Similarly, the playful dimension of a collective initiative can be easily underestimated as merely instrumental, confined to specific phases of the process, to 'not so serious' matters or just suitable for children or young people.

Our hypothesis is that designing citizen initiatives as participatory interventions (Agcal, Yin, Miller and Ray, 2025) can be very useful to address issues such as climate change. Thus, they would allow for a greater engagement in discussion, fostering mutual understanding and sense of belonging. Furthermore, in such processes, the introduction of playful elements might be key not only as motivational tools, but also to build citizen agency, cooperation, creation of communicative spaces, and citizen interaction based on accountability (Woolsey, 2020). We contemplate the following research questions:

- Which are the key elements for a qualitative evaluation of climate assemblies from the perspective of playful participation?
- How could a playful participatory form of inquiry be evaluated through a qualitative and propositive framework of analysis?

First, we will summarize our methodological proposal, structured in three key dimensions: (1) *Playful action*; (2) *Playful sociality*; (3) *Participatory action inquiry*. Then, we will apply this proposal to the case of the Citizens' Assembly for Climate of Catalonia (ACxCC), a participatory process organized by the Catalan Government (Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda) which took place between place between October 2023 and February 2024. The aim of the ACxCC was to sensitize about climate change and to hand a series of citizen proposals to the Catalan Parliament. It was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and through Horizon Europe program (project Horizon-CLIMAS) with the support of Deliberativa, a company specialized in large-scale participatory processes, and which took charge of the facilitation process.

With the support of qualitative visualizations, we will show how our results point towards the effects of how the promoters shape climate citizen process through key elements such as expected outcomes, sense of agency, skills, social interaction, power relations among participants, reciprocity and the definition of a communicative space, as well as self-reflection, intergenerational exchange or experimentation, more connected to playfulness.

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SCI09 Science Communication

PP 0773 Setting agendas, conveying expertise? The influence of science media centers on science journalism in the United Kingdom and Germany

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As newsroom resources continue to decline, journalists have become increasingly dependent on external expertise to navigate and verify complex scientific information. Science Media Centers (SMCs) aim to support quality science journalism by facilitating access to scientific experts at the interface between science and the media (Rödder 2015). However, SMCs operate differently across national contexts: the British SMC positions itself as an NGO promoting public engagement with scientific evidence, whereas the German SMC operates more as a journalism-oriented observation unit specializing in science (Buschow et al. 2022).

Despite growing scholarly interest in SMCs, their influence on journalism has not yet been investigated comparatively across countries. Addressing this gap, we examine (RQ1a) whether SMCs shape journalistic agenda-setting, (RQ1b) how often their materials are used by news outlets, and (RQ2) whether they affect the structure of experts cited in news articles.

Our study draws on 480 SMC releases (UK: 149; DE: 331 releases) published between 2022 and 2023. We identified all news articles on the same SMC event appearing from one day before to two days after each release within predefined media samples (UK: 36; DE: 40 outlets). This yielded 2,480 articles for the UK and 4,463 for Germany.

To determine SMC influence, we compared the experts referenced in SMC releases with those cited in news articles. We additionally used named entity recognition to identify other societal actors mentioned (DE: 6,333; UK: 5,110 entities). For comparability, analyses focus on events for which both SMC-influenced and SMC-uninfluenced articles existed (UK: 80 events; DE: 42 events).

RQ1a: In Germany, 32% of SMC releases were not covered by the media, compared to 18% in the UK. British SMC events (60%) were significantly more likely to receive medium-level coverage (10–50% of outlets) than German events (32%).

RQ1b: When coverage occurred, UK SMC materials were used significantly less frequently in articles (33%) than German materials (8%). This difference was particularly pronounced for low-attention events. In Germany, the corresponding articles are influenced by SMC materials in the median in 100% of cases, whereas in the UK, at least 50% of events feature only uninfluenced articles. When at least one influenced article existed, the difference between countries diminished.

RQ2: In SMC-influenced articles, an additional scientist is cited in the median both in Germany and in the UK compared to uninfluenced articles. An increased presence of *independent* experts was only observed in Germany.

Although we cannot draw causal conclusions, our findings suggest that both SMCs strengthen the integration of scientific expertise in news coverage. However, their agenda-setting functions differ substantially: the journalism-oriented German SMC appears to exert a stronger thematic influence than the NGO-like British SMC.

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SCI09 Science Communication

PP 0774 Motivation of science communication organisations for engaging in international networks

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The European science communication landscape is described as fragmented (Davies et al., 2021), with countries displaying different science cultures (Bauer, 2012) and science communication ecosystems (Fischer et al., 2025). Past decades have seen intensifying expansion of global and regional science communication networks (e.g., PCST, EUSEA, science journalists' unions) and transnational collaborations. These networks facilitate cross-border knowledge exchange through conferences and partnerships and expand professional communities (Bucchi et al., 2014).

However, the role that participation in these networks plays for science communicators has been little explored. This study investigates why institutions engage with international networks despite resource constraints and operational challenges, through qualitative interviews with nine European organizations engaged in science communication.

The study is based on organisations that enrolled as national hubs in the EU-funded COALESCE project, which is currently building the European Science Communication Competence Centre. The organisations range from academic institutions to NGOs and come from nine European countries (Portugal, France, Germany, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria). We conducted in-depth interviews about their current science communication practices, expectations for international networks, and perceptions of their national context.

The findings reveal multiple interconnected motivations for international networking. Most frequently, organizations express the perception that other countries are more advanced in science communication; therefore, international networking offers opportunities to learn best practices from other organisations and avoid "reinventing the wheel."

Beyond organisational development, interviewed organisations also felt able to support the development of their entire national community. Having an international network was perceived to increase their status within the national community and could be leveraged for advancing the adoption of better science communication practices and reducing fragmentation.

These findings indicate that international networks serve not merely as platforms for resource exchange, but as essential infrastructure for professionalizing and advancing science communication practice across Europe's fragmented landscape. The study contributes to understanding how transnational collaboration can address structural challenges in emerging professional fields.

SCI09 Science Communication

PP 0775 Who avoids science? Investigating patterns of science-related information avoidance

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Understanding information avoidance is crucial for science communication, as engagement with information about science is a key prerequisite for informed decision-making. Selective news avoidance refers to the deliberate avoidance of specific types of news content rather than refraining from news consumption in general (Skovsgaard & Andersen, 2022). Although existing research has examined selective avoidance of specific science-related topics—such as climate change (Yang & Kahlor, 2013), COVID-19 (Wiedicke et al., 2023), and health topics (Link et al., 2025)—systematic knowledge about the drivers of avoidance of information about *science in general* is lacking. We follow the information utility approach (Atkin, 1973) and hypothesize, based on prior research on selective news avoidance beyond science (e.g., Andersen et al, 2024), that selective avoidance of information about science is negatively associated with (H1a) higher interest in science, higher trust in media coverage on science, higher perceived benefits of science, higher science-related media use, more frequent interpersonal communication about science, stronger norm perceptions, higher satisfaction with media coverage on science, and greater proximity to science. We also hypothesize that political ideology, education, age, and gender are associated with selective avoidance of information about science (H1b).

Method

The study draws on preregistered nationally representative survey data from the Science Barometer Switzerland 2025 (N = 1,548, preregistration: https://osf.io/ek7ju/overview?view_only=b50812bdb3364db191ddde9d533a6d7e). Using a partial split-ballot design, a random subsample (N = 744) received questions measuring selective avoidance. To test the hypotheses, linear regression models were estimated with selective avoidance of science information (composite index $\alpha = .65$) as the dependent variable and science-related media use (composite index $\alpha = .82$), perceived benefits of science (composite index $\alpha = .72$), trust in media coverage on science, norm perceptions, satisfaction with science media coverage, proximity to science, political ideology, education, gender, and age as dependent variables. All variables were operationalized using established measures.

Results

Selective avoidance of information about science in general is negatively associated with interest in science (β = −.151, p = .015). In addition, science-related media use is positively associated with avoidance (β = .125, p = .042). More frequent conversations about science with peers are associated with lower selective avoidance (β = −.195, p = .002). Among socio-demographic variables, women are more likely to avoid science-related information (β = −.109, p = .040). No other variable included in the model had significant effects on science information avoidance.

Overall, the findings partially support the proposed hypotheses. Avoidance of science-related information appears to be stronger related to individual engagement with science rather than broader evaluative or normative factors. Given the counterintuitive positive association between overall media use and avoidance, additional channel-level analyses were conducted. They show that general internet use for science information (r = −.20***) and Wikipedia use (r = −.14**) are negatively associated with avoidance, whereas social media use (r = .08*) and instant messaging (r = .17**) are positively associated. This pattern suggests that science information avoiders rely more strongly on social media and instant messengers for – presumably – non-mainstream science-related information.

SCI09 Science Communication

PP 0776 The role of moral convictions in understanding compromise and tolerance

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Contemporary societies are confronted with a range of complex national and global challenges, which often involve so-called socio-scientific issues (SSIs): Issues that are informed by scientific evidence and expertise, yet simultaneously debated within the broader public sphere, in the media, and in politics[1]. Such issues cannot be resolved solely through scientific knowledge or expert advice. Rather, they require societal deliberation and the negotiation of solutions and compromises.

In such debates, questions of values and morality sometimes take precedence over factual or technical considerations, resulting in public contestations that are morally charged. When scientific evidence or policy positions are underpinned with undeniable moral values such as freedom, security or credibility, the discussion can shift away from the search for effective and balanced solutions for society as a whole[2].

This moralization of debates can lead to the psychological process of attitude moralization, through which preferences become values, non-moral attitudes turn into moral convictions[3]. Individuals who hold a moral conviction regarding an issue perceive it as a matter of fundamental right and wrong, an issue grounded in moral principles rather than personal preference[4]. Prior research shows that moral conviction can act as a significant barrier to political compromise[5]. Understanding how moral conviction shapes the willingness of citizens to compromise and be tolerant of opposing views is crucial for developing strategies to facilitate constructive public engagement with science-related policy debates.

Drawing on a survey conducted in February of 2025 in Germany (N = 2,340), this study examined how moral conviction relates to willingness to compromise, openness to opposing views, and opposition to censorship regarding the German energy transition. A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses was conducted separately for proponents and opponents of the energy transition, controlling for sociodemographic variables and party preference.

Results indicate that party preference is a strong predictor of all three outcome variables, revealing partisan divides, particularly between voters of the far-right AfD and the Green Party. Among proponents of the energy transition, stronger moral conviction is associated with lower willingness to compromise and reduced opposition to censorship. Among opponents, by contrast, moral conviction is positively associated with openness to opposing views. These findings suggests that moral conviction can but does not exclusively give rise to barriers of dialogue and deliberation. Rather, under certain conditions, it may also function as a bridging mechanism that enables individuals to engage more openly with opposing perspectives in highly contested public debates.

Overall, the findings suggest that moral conviction exerts complex effects rather than uniformly undermining tolerance and compromise, underscoring the importance of a more fine-grained analysis of these relationships.

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SCI09 Science Communication

PP 0777 Wild and wonderful, but not climate change: How extreme weather is framed in Irish local, farming, and fishing media

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Extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity globally as a result of climate change. As most people get their information on climate change via the news media, it is important to understand how different aspects of extreme weather events are constructed and debated in the media. Furthermore, most media research focused on climate change, and on weather events, has examined national print media. This research aims to add to our understanding of how the media in Ireland represent extreme weather events, but also to expand that understanding to include regional, local, and specialist media, thereby filling the gap created by the existing literature's focus on national broadsheets. The paper takes the case of Storm Éowyn, which made landfall off the west coast of Ireland in January 2025 and broke wind speed records on the island. To investigate the coverage of the event, we assembled a corpus of 450 articles from fishing, farming and local media outlets. The local sector was represented by six regional case study areas. We then carried out a framing analysis on the corpus and identified the most common ways in which the event was understood. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the category of weather frames- that is, frames that engaged specifically with the physical qualities of the storm. In analysing these frames we assess the extent to which journalists took the opportunity to reference climate change. The core finding is that these understudied media sectors framed the storm in terms of spectacle and intensity, and contextualised it in terms of storms remembered from the past, rather than placing it in the context of climate change. These findings highlight a key missed opportunity in climate change communication. Specialist and local presses can be a powerful ally in raising awareness of climate change by relating it to everyday events of interest to their respective audience. Our research demonstrates that this potential is not being leveraged effectively.

SCI10 Activism

PP 0883 Eco-anxiety, social media use, and young people in the Netherlands

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The impacts of climate change on mental health are increasingly recognised as significant (Pihkala, 2020), as it appears that a growing number of people experience worrying and a variety of negative emotions about the climate crisis and its consequences (Ojala et al., 2021). This, emerging studies argue, may be linked to eco-anxiety, or "the distress caused by climate change where people are becoming anxious about their future" (Coffey et al., 2021). Although the term's definition is still disputed, the phenomenon involves, among others, feelings of fear, sadness, guilt, anger, despair, grief, and hopelessness (Léger-Goodes et al., 2022). Eco-anxiety appears to affect young people the most (Whitmarsh et al., 2022) – which, Wu et al. (2020, p. 435) argue, might be due to them being at "a crucial point in their physical and psychological development", making them more vulnerable to stress and anxiety. Individuals' wider social systems, including their relationships with family and friends, have also been studied in relation to eco-anxiety (Crandon et al., 2022). Such relationships can act as sources of information and are often mediated through media (Rosenthal, 2022). However, while existing studies hint at the fact that media may be linked to eco-anxiety (Ogunbode et al., 2022), the relation has not been widely studied (Whitmarsh et al., 2022). Given the growing amount of time young people spend online, this connection calls for further research. Therefore, the present study aims at understanding the potential relation between young people's (aged 16–24 years) use of social media and their eco-anxiety experiences.

The data draws on a representative survey (N = 1,000) of young people (16–24 years) in the Netherlands, conducted by YouGov. The survey explored several dimensions, including general use of social media, social media use and climate information exposure, mental health and wellbeing, climate action and climate-friendly behaviour, climate anxiety, social norms and perceived efficacy, personality, and demographics. Participants reported being exposed several times per week to information about climate change on social media, particularly on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. Importantly, the findings seem to indicate that homophilious exposure (receiving climate change information aligned with one's own viewpoints) on social media is associated with their eco-anxiety experiences. In addition, participants' efficacy beliefs, both collective (e.g. trusting that young people can motivate others to solve the climate crisis) and personal (e.g. trusting that one can do its part to solve the climate crisis), also appear to be positively related to climate anxiety.

Together, these results advance the understanding of the relationship between social media use and eco-anxiety (Maran & Begotti, 2021) among young people, highlighting previously unexplored contributing factors.

SCI10 Activism

PP 0884 Green message, dark intent: Conceptualizing far-right greenwashing as dark participation

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As far-right governments increasingly assume administrative positions worldwide, public concern about environmental protection and legal frameworks has intensified. Research on far-right political communication has extensively documented the centrality of climate skepticism and the outright denial of environmental issues within their discourses. However, less attention has been paid to a more recent right-wing populist strategy: greenwashing.

Greenwashing is understood as a set of communicative strategies in which actors construct an image of environmental responsibility that does not correspond to their actual performance. It involves discrepancies between discourse and practices aimed at producing a positive public perception without substantive environmental change.

Although It has been extensively discussed in Public Relations research, less attention has been given in relation to right-wing populism. Nevertheless, recent empirical studies (Vicenová, & Mišík, 2025) point to an emerging greenwashing far-right pattern: rather than abandoning environmental rhetoric, they selectively capture it to advance conservative, neo-extractivist, or authoritarian agendas while appearing environmentally concerned. Consequences are related to undermining the capacity of public opinion to critically assess environmental policies, and weakens an informed debate on sustainability.

Our conceptual contribution adopts dark participation as an overarching analytical lens (Quandt, 2018) to systematize greenwashing as a form of political disinformation across the five dimensions of dark participation: actors, reasons, objects/targets, audiences, and processes. Focusing on far-right actors as the primary agents, we argue that reasons involve electoral and legal goals and the delegitimization of opponents; targets encompass activists, Green parties, and/or local communities affected by resource exploitation; and audiences include voters, media, institutional partners, and world-trade organizations.

Regarding processes, we conceptualize two main ways in which far-right greenwashing operates. First, greenwashing is used to "greenify" political and contentious issues, capturing sustainability to attack political opponents and/or social minorities - blaming them for environmental degradation, thus justifying conservative and exclusionary agendas. Second, greenwashing is used to advance economic activities related to resource extraction embedded in confusing or misleading information, thus blurring the risks and impacts of such activities.

Greenwashing is "dark" not because it relies on outright falsehoods, but because it distorts environmental risks within policy and legislative debates. By partially legitimate environmental concerns to shift accountability and justify specific regulatory outcomes, far-right greenwashing operates along a spectrum of dark participation that blurs the boundaries of democratic environmental policymaking.

This proposed framework offers an analytical entry point for comparative research by conceptualizing greenwashing as a form of dark participation within far-right communication. As far-right actors consolidate institutional power, examining these communication strategies becomes theoretically and politically relevant, given their capacity to distort democratic deliberation and environmental governance. In the context of polarized environmental issues, the framework enables the systematic examination of these dynamics and advances critical theoretical debate.

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SCI10 Activism

PP 0885 Nested publics in youth climate activism across global and local contexts

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Content circulating on social media generates emotional resonance, fosters affective engagement and amplifies emotionally charged expressions, thereby enabling networked publics to gather or dissolve around shared emotional bonds. Hashtags function as metadata labels that organize content systematically and facilitate interaction around specific topics, making collective discussion possible. Beyond enabling retrieval, hashtags also perform a form of contextualization, allowing users to situate their own expressions within ongoing conversations by tracing what others articulate through hashtags. This study approaches these dynamics primarily through the theoretical lenses of hashtag publics and connective action.

This paper examines youth-led digital climate activism and investigates how climate issues circulate, reorganize, and localize within social media hashtag networks. The analysis focuses on two groups: prominent young climate activists, and ordinary young activists in Portugal. All public posts published between January 1, 2022 and December 31, 2024 were collected.

This study applies link community analysis at three analytical levels. First, it identifies distinct link communities across the dataset. Second, it examines nested communities within topic clusters. Finally, it calculates the community centrality of each hashtag, enabling the identification of how different dimensions of climate change discourse intertwine through youth activists' hashtag practices on social media.

The findings indicate, first, that publics do not coalesce around a single hashtags or isolated thematic cluster; rather, they take shape through shared link edges that connect multiple topic areas. Second, climate action communication follows divergent logics across activist scales. Prominent youth climate activists tend to prioritize actor connectivity, using specific hashtags to delineate boundaries while emphasizing issue depth and professional consensus. By contrast, ordinary youth climate activists in Portugal foreground issue embedding, rely more on general-purpose hashtags, and integrate climate concerns into everyday communicative streams to maximize breadth and visibility. Third, global climate hashtags become re-embedded within local public arenas through their linkage to Portuguese political hashtags, effectively relocating global issues within national political contexts.

Taken together, these findings illuminate distinct communication strategies among young climate activists operating in different contexts, as well as the varying structural roles that climate labels assume within hashtag networks. While much existing research concentrates on semantic meanings or communicative effects, this study directs analytical attention toward the networked architecture of climate communication. It further demonstrates that digital activism does not merely facilitate collective action; the ongoing formation, fragmentation, and recombination of publics constitutes a political process in its own right. Drawing on theories of hashtag publics and connective action, the study offers a structural-level perspective on how climate issues become embedded, sustained, and reorganized within digital publics.

SCI11 More-Than-Human Communication

PP 0989 Engineering control: Media discourses on biotechnological solutions in Invasion Biology and de-extinction

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So-called animal 'invasive species' are increasingly portrayed by European and international bodies as one of the major threats to biodiversity loss. This places the control and management of 'invasive species' at the heart of environmental communication debates. In particular, this study explores how news media construct biotechnology as a scientific and ethical solution for 'invasive species' management. As biotechnology gains prominence in public debates on conservation, media representations play a key role in shaping public understanding of science, ethics, and policy. Combining insights from Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Critical Animal Studies (CAS), the research employs qualitative frame and critical discourse analysis on a corpus of international English-language news articles obtained from the Factiva database with coverage of the association between biotechnology and its framing as a solution within the field of invasion science. The research examines how narratives of biotechnological innovation and control of non-desirable non-human animals circulate across media discourses. It extends STS analyses by applying the co-production framework to the underexplored field of biotechnological control of 'invasive species', thereby connecting sociotechnical inquiry with questions of multispecies justice. These co-production lenses are essential and necessary to explore how science, technology, and social order are mutually constitutive, and serve to move beyond the merely descriptive accounts of media coverage. At the same time, it advances CAS by bringing the ethics of biotechnology into the context of free-roaming and so-called invasive animals, broadening the scope of interspecies ethics to include technologies of ecological management. Preliminary findings suggest that journalistic framings often reinforce technoscientific optimism while downplaying ethical reflection and the structural, anthropocentric roots of ecological problems. By connecting science communication with ethical and political critique, this study contributes to understanding how scientific authority and moral legitimacy are negotiated in the media within a context of high perceived environmental urgency.

SCI11 More-Than-Human Communication

PP 0990 Eco-design promoting inclusion and connections with living organisms?

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In France, design sciences lie at the intersection of information and communication sciences and engineering sciences (Darras et al., 2017, 2018; Gantier, 2018). In its primary sense, design is a form of artistic creation, whose purpose is to work with forms and renew their aesthetics. This approach can apply to spatial forms (spatial design, architectural and urban design, interior architecture), volumetric forms (product design, industrial design, object design), textiles (fashion design, styling), graphics (graphic design, image design, graphic design), audiovisual and cinematographic forms (visual and sound design, creation of animated images or sounds and new media) or interactive forms (interaction design, interface design, digital design, game design) (Leleu-Merviel et al., 2013, Mitropoulou et al., 2018)…

Designing is above all about communicating, in the sense that co-design is understood as an integrative, inclusive, short-loop activity, where co-constructed and shared interaction is an integral part of the design to come. In this sense, eco-design is seen as design methodologies applied to the environmental approach to products or processes that take into account all positive or negative externalities in product design (Varžinskas et al., 2020, Singh et al., 2019). This involves considering environmental constraints and issues, methods and tools for improving carbon footprints, adopting an eco-design approach, and working within a circular economy loop (Brezet et al., 1997; Vallet et al., 2013; Royo et al., 2023). The extensive literature on eco-design of products and packaging clearly shows the extent to which these new engineering approaches are developing, within the overall framework of so-called responsible consumption (Karlsson et al., 2006, Borchardt et al., 2011, MacDonald et al., 2015, Rio & Tyl, 2025, Tyl et al., 2015).

The research question we propose today stems from a general sense of surprise: why limit eco-design to a single operational and engineering approach? Why not consider eco-design in its vibrant social dimension, as a way of mediating and reconsidering today's complex environmental problems through an integrative and interactive approach enabled by eco-design techniques?

In this paper, we propose an initial theoretical approach that revisits participatory approaches and stakeholder theory in relation to eco-design. In the second part, we apply this analytical framework to a specific case study: the Parliaments of the Living, an experimental space aimed at integrating the voice of living beings—both human and non-human—into local decision-making. This innovative project seeks to create an alliance between different forms of life and rethink our relationship with the world. The Parliament of the Living was tested in Dracénie, France, in 2025. Its objective is to include biodiversity in public decisions: The Parliament of the Living aims to redefine local policies so that they take into account the needs of ecosystems and the species that live there, and to mobilize young people: Young people aged 16 to 25 will be at the heart of the project, participating in interactive workshops, educational debates, and concrete actions. This civic initiative aims to raise their awareness of the major issues of our time and to actively engage them.

SCI11 More-Than-Human Communication

PP 0991 Transcending anthropocentrism: A discourse-theoretical analysis of Moulding Nature's communicative-artistic tactics

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The paper analyses the artworks on display at the *Moulding Nature* exhibition, to study how they related to the anthropocentric hegemonic and the ecocentric counter-hegemonic discursive assemblages. Theoretically, the study combines a discourse-theoretical framework (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Carpentier, 2017) and assemblage theory (DeLanda, 2006; 2016) with critical environmental theory, in particular its discursive strand (Hajer, 1995; Dryzek 1997) to analyse the discursive construction of human-nature relations, and the role of political struggles for hegemony in these relations.

The object of our study, the *Moulding Nature* exhibition, took place at the Stockholm-based arts centre Färgfabriken, in Sweden, from 26 August until 26 November 2023. During this period, it had 5800 visitors. Curated by Nico Carpentier, Daniel Urey and Emilia Rosenqvist, the exhibition was a communicative-artistic intervention aimed—according to the exhibition website—at raising "questions about how we perceive our environment [… and] how different discourses affect the way we give meaning to nature and the role of mankind in it." (Färgfabriken exhibition website)

While the exhibition itself used arts-based research (Leavy, 2015) as a core methodology to respectfully combine artistic and academic approaches, the analysis of the articulation of environmental discourses through the materiality of the exhibition, and the discourses it invoked (and critiqued), deployed a combination of discourse-theoretical analysis (DTA) (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007; Carpentier, 2017) and auto-ethnography (Ellis et al., 2010; Adams et al., 2022). The material analyzed with DTA consisted of (in particular) the artworks, their labels, their online descriptions at the Färgfabriken website and the exhibition's press release.

As the relationship between the artworks and the diversity of environmental discourses is not mimetic, but highly complex and multidimensional—sometimes even on the verge of being contradictory—this analysis focusses on the mechanisms (or tactics, see de Certeau, 1984) that the artworks (and their artists) use to relate to the anthropocentric hegemonic and the ecocentric counterhegemonic discursive assemblages. As the analysis will show, these mechanisms include critical resignification, parody, transdichotomisation, and demonstrations of nature's strength and diversity.

The paper will thus demonstrate the political struggles over the environment, with its contingencies, but will also argue that there are no clearly demarcated trench lines between these two main discursive assemblages, that there is no simple morality to guide choices and preferences, and that there is not even discursive stability when it comes to the multitude of discourses that feature—sometimes wholly, sometimes partially—in these discursive assemblages. Instead, *Moulding Nature* shows discourses with vague contours, floating signifiers, changing alliances, endless rearticulations in practice or as opportunities, and diverse invitations with even more interpretations, witnessing the importance and complexities of artistic interventions in these political struggles over the environment.

SCI12 Migration & obstructionism in climate reporting

PP 0997 Structured absences: Climate change as a blind spot in African and European migration coverage

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Climate change is increasingly discussed as an important factor shaping migration, particularly in regions exposed to environmental stress. In journalistic coverage of migration, however, climate-related causes remain largely marginal. This paper examines the absence of climate change in migration reporting and asks how this blind spot can be understood in relation to dominant patterns of migration coverage. Rather than treating the lack of climate references as a failure of reporting, the study approaches absence as an empirical finding that reveals how environmental issues are positioned within migration reporting, an area that remains largely shaped by political and crisis-oriented frames (Lecheler et al., 2019).

The analysis builds on earlier comparative research on climate change reporting in African, European, and US news media, which showed that climate change, despite its global character, is often reported through national and political lenses (reference anonymized). Drawing on these insights and responding to calls for more comparative and less Eurocentric perspectives in migration and journalism research (Hafez & Grüne, 2022), the paper turns to migration coverage and examines whether and how environmental factors are integrated into reporting on mobility.

Empirically, the study is based on a quantitative content analysis of 1,871 online news articles published between May 2023 and April 2024 in 30 opinion-leading news outlets across 15 African and European countries. Using a most-different systems design (Przeworski & Teune, 1970), the analysis focuses on explicitly coded main topics and subtopics of migration coverage, alongside formal characteristics, and actor constellations. Across both regions, references to climate change are rare, even in contexts where environmental stress is widely discussed as relevant to migration dynamics.

The findings suggest that this absence aligns with patterns of domestication and political framing in migration coverage. Migration is predominantly covered as a national political issue, centred on policy debates, and governmental actors. Within this framework, structural and long-term factors such as climate change tend to be sidelined. As a result, connections between climate change and migration are rarely made explicit in migration journalism.

The paper contributes to research in science and environment communication by showing how climate change is systematically marginalised within migration coverage. The comparative perspective across African and European media highlights that this blind spot persists across different journalistic contexts, despite different exposure to environmental stress and migration dynamics. The findings reveal that migration is largely framed through political and national lenses, leaving structural links between climate change and mobility largely invisible in mainstream reporting.

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SCI12 Migration & obstructionism in climate reporting

PP 0998 Polish online media coverage of climate refugees

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Climate change has increasingly dangerous consequences, including massive displacement, an increasingly pressing issue affecting people globally. According to IDMC (2025), at the end of 2024, 83.4 million people worldwide were internally displaced, of whom 9.8 million were resettled due to natural disasters. The need to relocate primarily affects those living in the least developed countries in climate-vulnerable areas, such as deserts, small islands at risk of submersion, and territories particularly vulnerable to weather-related disasters, including hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes. It also affects EU countries, with Poland among those facing significant challenges due to its climate-exposed agricultural regions.

The research examines the representation of climate-induced displacement in Polish online media from 2019 to 2023, a period marked by escalating global climate catastrophes and record-breaking internal displacement. The study aims to analysis the complexity of the climate refugee issue in Polish media across domestic, European, and international contexts.

Most research on media coverage of climate refugees focuses on specific regions like Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Island States (Hoeg and Tulloch, 2019). The climate justice narrative is rarely used in this context (Dreher and Voyer, 2015). European media emphasize catastrophe and crisis, framing climate migrants as security threats (Bonneux and Van Praag, 2024). Western media often speak about climate refugees rather than giving them a voice (Hoeg and Tulloch, 2019; Keller

et al., 2020). Ribot, Faye, and Turner (2020) argue that climate migrants are used to spread climate issues, not to address their needs, leading to politicization and negative perceptions. Conversely, Global South media like Al Jazeera highlight crisis narratives and personal stories (Boas et al., 2019). Polish researchers mostly focus on illegal migration during the 2015–2018 crisis, border issues, Ukraine war refugees, and legal solutions (Troszyński and El-Ghamari, 2022; Jupowicz-Ginalska and Gober, 2024). The coverage of climate refugees in Polish media is underexplored, and the presented study aims to address this gap.

A quantitative and qualitative content analysis was used. Based on the BuzzSumo platform, a database of articles was retrieved from Polish news and thematic websites using the keywords "climate refugees" and "climate migrations". Data processing was conducted in MAXQDA 2024 to identify thematic clusters and linguistic landscapes. The qualitative research was grounded in framing and thematic analysis.

The findings indicate that media coverage is structured around four narrative frames: a legal - addressing international protection gaps, an economic frame on disaster costs, a social frame focusing on human rights and personal tragedies, and an environmental frame concentrating on natural system drivers. The thematic analysis reveals three distinct clusters: diagnostic threads explaining the concept, causal analysis of environmental and anthropogenic drivers, and solution-oriented proposals ranging from legal reforms to adaptation technologies. The research further identifies a temporal dimension in the discourse, in which migration is presented through a present-day lens of immediate urgency, a future-oriented perspective on looming security threats, and a historical perspective linking past societal collapses to climate fluctuations.

SCI12 Migration & obstructionism in climate reporting

PP 0999 How is the uncertainty in drought prognoses portrayed in newspaper coverage?

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Climate change-induced shifts in precipitation patterns are increasing the frequency of droughts in various parts of the world. Prognoses assess the risk of future drought crises but always carry some degree of scientific uncertainty. Their findings are publicly discussed in the media. Journalists might be tempted to downplay uncertainties to avoid ambiguity, but studies show that the usefulness of prognoses for the recipient also depends on how uncertainty is presented: Prognoses that include specific numerical probabilistic uncertainties (e.g., 'a 30% chance of drought') positively influence understanding and trust, compared to verbal descriptions (e.g., 'drought is unlikely') or deterministic prognoses. Regarding non-quantifiable epistemic uncertainties (e.g., assessments of the quality or reliability of a prognosis), there are similarly positive effects when experts express high confidence in the prognosis compared to expressing low confidence. Studies on whether media use forms of uncertainty that promote or hinder trust and understanding are limited and often do not clearly differentiate these forms. There are indications that how uncertainty is depicted varies depending on the professional background of the cited sources. Additionally, in some thematic contexts, prognosis uncertainty is presented in a more detailed and probabilistic numerical manner, possibly because they have a higher news value due to their closeness. This study examines whether media representations of drought prognoses use forms of uncertainty representation that foster trust and understanding, and whether the influence of cited sources and closeness on how uncertainty is portrayed can be confirmed.

To do this, news articles from newspapers and online portals were analyzed through a quantitative content analysis, using the German context as an example. A total of 325 articles published between 2018 and 2023 were coded to identify the communicated uncertainties, the cited sources, and the geographical closeness of the predicted drought.

Results show that 56% of the articles mention prognosis uncertainties, with probabilistic uncertainties being discussed significantly more often than epistemic uncertainties ($\chi2(1) = 12.29$, $p < .001$). When probabilistic uncertainty was presented, specific numerical data were rarely used, and verbal paraphrases were more common ($\chi2(1)=56.64$, $p < .001$). When assessments of the prognosis's epistemic uncertainty were provided, deficiencies were mentioned significantly more often than positive aspects ($\chi2(1)=14.16$, $p < .001$). The geographical closeness of the predicted drought did not significantly influence how uncertainty was depicted ($\chi2(2)=1.18$, $p = .554$). However, a connection was found with the sources cited in the article ($\chi2(12)= 54.84$, Fisher's Exact Test: $p < .001$). According to a post hoc analysis of standardized residuals, uncertainty was discussed more frequently in connection with scientific sources than with non-scientific sources.

The results show that uncertainty in prognoses is often either not reported at all or representations that tend to cause confusion. As a practical recommendation, communicators should present probabilities using concrete numbers. Even if discussing epistemic uncertainty cannot be avoided for transparency reasons, more focus should also be given to the positive aspects related to the quality of the prognosis.

SCI12 Migration & obstructionism in climate reporting

PP 1000 From global cooling to sanctions as climate injustice: Obstructing adaptation to climate change in Russian media, 2019–2025

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Academic interest in climate obstruction—the actions and efforts that slow or block the implementation of climate policy—in authoritarian and non-democratic societies is growing, partly driven by the success of authoritarian parties in many democratic countries during the 2020s. Examining climate obstruction in non-democratic contexts helps anticipate practices authoritarian actors may adopt elsewhere. Russia offers a crucial case: climate denialism there is rooted in political and economic systems reliant on fossil fuel extraction and export, with the energy transition perceived as an existential threat to the regime. Cultural drivers also play a role, as public demand for climate information has been minimal.

This paper investigates climate obstruction in Russian online pro-state news media (2019–2025), focusing on how adaptation to climate change is framed, and how Russia's ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2019 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 shaped understandings of adaptation. The emphasis on adaptation reflects two factors: its rising prominence in global climate debates—particularly regarding the adaptation finance gap in the Global South—and the lack of prior scholarship on adaptation in Russian media.

The material consists of climate-related stories from Russian online news outlets that are either state-owned or pro-state. As shown in prior studies, mainstream media in Russia closely follows state climate policy, making these sources central to political discourse. They are also more influential on public opinion than opposition media that now mostly operates in exile. In the first phase, a content analysis categorizes climate obstruction in two ways: primary, secondary, and tertiary obstruction following Ekberg et al. (2023, 8–13), and phenomenon, action, and source obstruction as outlined by Fortin et al. (2025, 4–8). The second phase applies thematic analysis to identify obstructionist features within these categories.

The results demonstrate how understandings of adaptation and related obstructionist features have evolved in Russian pro-state media. A pilot study of one commercial outlet, *Kommersant*, suggests adaptation is often framed as adjusting to other countries' climate politics rather than to material environmental changes. Western sanctions are depicted as obstructing Russia's ability to adapt to its changing climate. The material also includes classic forms of climate denialism that call for an abrupt halt to adaptation efforts for a warming climate, instead advocating rapid adaptation measures for a radically cooler climate and claiming scientific evidence as justification.

The conclusions discuss the cultural and material drivers of climate obstruction in Russia and highlight how evidence from Russian media can inform understandings of obstructionist discourses likely to be employed by authoritarian parties in democratic contexts.

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SCI13 Climate Change and Social Media

PP 1090 Cool conversations or heated arguments? A content analysis of climate change framing and comment discourse on TikTok

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Public engagement with climate change increasingly occurs on social media platforms, where algorithmic curation, multimedia formats, and interactive engagement shape how environmental issues are perceived and discussed. TikTok, in particular, has emerged as a central site of climate discourse among its primarily young audience, offering a blend of authentic, personal expression, political commentary, and trend-driven communication. Consequently, this platform offers valuable insight into this young generation's perspective on climate change and their dynamic co-construction. While previous research (e.g., Basch et al., 2021; Hautea et al., 2021) has examined climate-related content on social media, limited work has investigated direct relations between specific frames in TikTok videos and corresponding responses expressed in user comments. Understanding this relationship is essential to grasp how young users engage in the climate change issue and navigate this misinformation-laden environment.

This study explores climate discourse through both the content and comments of popular TikTok videos with the hashtag #climatechange, focusing on how different frames trigger certain audience responses. A corpus of 264 popular TikTok

videos (each with over 10.000 likes) was analyzed through an inductive thematic framing approach (Van Gorp, 2010). For each video, the top twenty comments were scraped and processed, resulting in a dataset of 5480 comments. These were examined using sentiment analysis (VADER) and topic modeling (LDA) (Qiao & Williams, 2021. This exploratory mixed-methods design enabled an analysis of visual-narrative framing and discursive audience reactions, accounting for the emotional, argumentative, and layered nature of TikTok. Together, these analyses provide a comprehensive overview of recurring thematic frames in climate change messages, and their correlation to common audience reactions in their natural environment.

Eleven frames [PS1] were identified in the videos, amongst which 'Effects of climate change', 'Education and information', 'Emotional fatalism', and 'Activism' were the most frequent. Responses to videos were mostly personal and emotional, often expressing positive affect and personal relevance (34%), climate anxiety (15%), or political criticism (13%). Notably, activist and fatalist frames both elicited an increased likelihood of activist comments, suggesting that fatalism does not solely suppress engagement. Instead, moderate levels of fatalist framing appeared to increase urgency and motivate calls for action. Moreover, the analysis revealed a strong relationship between misinformation and the prevalence of misinformation or counter-argumentation in comments. Often times, videos attempting to debunk climate skepticism contained comments presenting ecological proof of the importance (e.g. "there's flowers in Antarctica") or insignificance of the issue (e.g., "Plymouth rock still not below water"). Consequently, misinforming videos echoed more misinforming comments. These findings highlight TikTok as a playground where users negotiate truthful information, rather than passively consume content. Political discussions were also common in both comments and video frames, debating systemic versus individual responsibility. These discussions were often associated with negative sentiment.

Collectively, these findings go hand-in-hand with TikTok's affordances as a platform, with personalized algorithmic feeds, audiovisual storytelling, ironic and trend-centered expression, and interactive discussions. We see that these affordances shape climate change discourse and increase emotional engagement, creating a dynamic communicative environment where climate activism, anxiety, and misinformation constantly alternate.

SCI13 Climate Change and Social Media

PP 1091 Scrolling through the climate crisis: Longitudinal evidence on climate science information diets on TikTok

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Social media platforms have become significant arenas for public engagement with scientific topics, including climate change (Pearce et al., 2018; Sultana et al., 2024). As a consequence, TikTok has emerged as a key site for science communication, reaching younger audiences through short-form video content blending entertainment with information (Radin & Light, 2022; Zeng et al., 2020). However, scholarly understanding of how individuals encounter and engage with climate-related scientific content on TikTok remains limited (Hautea et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2023). Few studies have investigated individual-level information behaviour over time, including how users' exposure to climate communication evolves as they navigate the platform.

Effective public engagement with climate change depends both on exposure to scientific information and on encountering diverse perspectives, sources, and framings (Moser, 2010; Corner et al., 2014). TikTok's For You Page plays a central role in shaping content visibility, raising questions about whether platform affordances support meaningful engagement with climate science or constrain users to narrow, potentially polarizing information environments (Baumann et al., 2025; Scalvini, 2023).

Drawing on a four-month longitudinal study (n = 1,035) that combines mobile in-app tracking across multiple social media platforms with 12 survey waves, we investigate:

RQ1: How diverse is individuals' exposure to climate change-related content on TikTok in terms of topics, sources, and scientific perspectives?

RQ2: How do individual engagement patterns with climate change-related content evolve over time?

RQ3: What user characteristics and behaviours are associated with more diverse versus more constrained climate science engagement?

Theoretically, we integrate public engagement with science (PES) frameworks with research on algorithmic information exposure. While PES scholarship provides normative grounding for why diverse science engagement matters (Bubela et al., 2009), we operationalize diversity through "information diet" measures, entropy-based indices capturing the range and balance of climate content in individual viewing histories (De Vreese & Neijens, 2016; Loecherbach et al., 2020). This integration allows us to connect structural patterns of content exposure to their implications for climate science engagement.

Our methodology employs behavioural in-app tracking of TikTok usage over the four-month study period. Climate-relevant content is classified along three dimensions aligned with our research questions: (1) topic (thematic categories including physical climate science, impacts, mitigation, and adaptation), (2) source type (e.g., scientists, science communicators, news, or influencers), and (3) scientific perspective (e.g., consensus-affirming, solution-oriented, skeptical). For each participant, we calculate normalized Shannon entropy indices for each dimension, where higher values indicate more diverse

information diets. Latent growth curve modeling will characterize temporal trajectories of engagement (RQ2), while multilevel regression will identify user characteristics (measured through survey data) associated with diverse versus constrained exposure patterns (RQ3).

Our research provides behavioural evidence, rather than relying purely on self-reports, on how audiences encounter climate science through algorithmic platforms. We address concerns about algorithmically constrained information exposure with empirical specificity, identifying predictors of narrow versus diverse engagement patterns. Our findings will inform climate communicators and platform researchers seeking to understand how TikTok's affordances shape public engagement with climate science.

SCI13 Climate Change and Social Media

PP 1092 Seeing climate change from distant to close? Multimodal representations of construal level and audience engagement with climate change videos on YouTube

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Despite scientific consensus and escalating impacts, public engagement with climate change remains limited (Hügel & Davies, 2020). A key explanation is that climate change is often perceived as abstract and psychologically distant rather than concrete and proximate (O'Neill, 2013) - after all, it unfolds across long temporal horizons, large spatial scales, uncertain futures, and abstract social relations (Carvalho, 2010), and is frequently communicated in these terms (Rebich-Hespanha et al., 2015). Research shows, however, that such abstract representations reduce perceived urgency and efficacy, whereas emphasizing local, present, and personal impacts can increase engagement and policy support (Spence & Pidgeon, 2010; Chu, 2022). These dynamics are captured by construal level theory (CLT) and psychological distance (Trope & Liberman, 2010).

According to CLT, individuals mentally represent events along a continuum from abstract to concrete, with greater abstraction corresponding to greater psychological distance (Liberman et al., 2007). Psychological distance is conceptualized across four dimensions: temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical (Trope & Liberman, 2010). While CLT originally emphasized egocentric perception, individuals can also adopt nonegocentric construals that incorporate others' experiences or broader global contexts (Liberman & Förster, 2009). For global issues such as climate change, people often combine egocentric and nonegocentric perspectives, particularly in digital media where construals extend beyond individual cognition to shared social experiences (Schattman et al., 2021; Dubey et al., 2025).

Most existing research on CLT and psychological distance in climate communication focuses on text, despite the central role of visuals (Metag, 2020) that can shape perceived distance and related responses (Duan & Bombara, 2022). Yet climate imagery frequently relies on abstract and distant icons, like polar bears, reinforcing detachment (O'Neill, 2013). Furthermore, alignment between visuals and text enhances meaning-making and credibility, whereas dissonance may undermine engagement (Feldman & Hart, 2018).

YouTube is a major platform for climate communication (Yang et al., 2022). While its algorithmic dynamics often reinforce abstract, global framings, particularly in dominant languages like English (Segerberg & Magnani, 2025), its participatory affordances also enable localized and personalized storytelling (Duan et al., 2024). However, research rarely examines how construals is communicated multimodally on YouTube or considers all four dimensions of distance (Maiella et al., 2020). Hence, we ask:

RQ1 *How are temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical distance represented visually and textually in climate-related YouTube videos?*

RQ2 *How are these dimensions distributed across visual and textual topics?*

RQ3 *How are psychological distance and topics related to audience engagement (likes, shares, comments)?*

We analyze 825 YouTube videos collected in November 2025, segmented into 69,064 visual-text pairs based on major scene changes. A subset is manually coded for construals based on established codebooks (Duan et al., 2017; Snefjella & Kuperman, 2015; Guenther et al., 2023) to validate the automated approach. A multimodal large language model is used to classify construals across the full dataset. Visual and textual topics are identified using BERTopic. Differences between visual and textual construals, associations with topics, and relationships with engagement metrics are examined using inferential statistics and negative binomial regression models.

We are currently annotating the validation dataset; all analyses will be completed before ECC26.

SCI13 Climate Change and Social Media

PP 1093 Young adults' perceptions of climate change on social media: A focus group study

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Young adults aged 18–25 are a critical target population for climate communication. With increasing independence, responsibility, and awareness, this group has a large potential influence on climate change – both positively and negatively – through their behaviour, networks, and civil and political action. Simultaneously, this age group reports high levels of worry, powerlessness, and other negative emotions around the topic of climate change. In this study, we investigated how young adults perceive climate communication on social media. Specifically, we studied the climate emotions that social media content about climate change evokes and investigated which type of content is likely to inspire climate action in young adults.

To this end, we conducted three focus groups with 20 Dutch young adults in total. The starting point for the discussions were social media posts (mostly from Instagram and Tiktok) collected by the participants themselves, ensuring the data reflected the participants' own algorithms. For each piece of content, participants were asked to comment in a virtual comment section using Mentimeter and write down on post-its which emotions they felt after engaging with the content. The Climate Emotions Wheel from Climate Mental Health Network was used as inspiration and guidance for the participants. Subsequently, participants were asked to place their post-its on a grid with two axes, one ranging from negative to positive and the other indicating to what extent the content inspired climate action. Transcripts of the focus groups, combined with the Mentimeter results and grids with post-its, were analysed both inductively and deductively.

Preliminary results show that most of the discussed climate change-related content evoked negative emotions, such as frustration, concern, and disappointment. Some content evoked positive emotions such as hope and inspiration, while others were deemed neutral or uninteresting. Participants found that positive messages were more likely to inspire action than negative ones, especially when they included small, doable calls to action, relevant to their lifestyles. In many posts, however, the call to action was vague, absent, or impractical for young adults, leaving the audience passive and uninspired. Content which illustrated the concrete impacts and solutions of climate change as well as new perspectives on the climate crisis drew the participants' attention. Posts that leveraged social media trends and used messengers who were considered both popular and trustworthy resonated strongly. Important to note is that most participants encountered very little climate change-related content on their social media feeds, even if the topic was of interest to them.

The preliminary results imply that there are opportunities for climate communication on social media, but that in order to reach young adults, content must be tailored to their lived experiences and range of influence. A stronger focus on content that evokes positive emotions with clear and relevant calls to action could be beneficial to inspire climate action in young adults. Popular, trusted messengers and current trends that resonate with this group could help draw engagement and encourage behaviour change. More engaging climate content could also increase the quantity and frequency of climate content in young adults' feeds.

SCI14 Sustainability

PP 1099 Imagining a sustainable internet of things: A comparative study of IoT imaginaries in Europe, China, and the United States

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The Internet of Things (IoT) (ITU, 2005) enables comprehensive monitoring of the effects of human activities on Earth's ecosystems (IPCC, 2023), potentially facilitating the green transition that the 195 parties to the Paris Agreement signed up to (United_Nations, 2015). Human intelligence may thus tap into the intelligence of nature (Abram, 1996) to ensure the survival and continued coexistence of human and other species. But the scope and the scale of the necessary monitoring of natural and built environments simultaneously entails surveillance of persons, communities, and cultures in what might become a "green but inhumane" future (Creutzig et al., 2022). The paper identifies, contextualizes, and assesses the resulting ethical dilemmas and controversies that are emerging in the window of opportunity between 2025 and 2050, identified by the Paris Agreement as the deadline for a net-zero world. The first section introduces the massive planetary monitoring systems currently being implemented in the European Union (https://destination-earth.eu), the United States (https://esto.nasa.gov/earth-system-digital-twin/), and China (https://earthlab.iap.ac.cn/en/index.html#firstPage). The second section details their functions of information processing about ecosystems and societies, networked communication among private companies, public institutions, and citizens, and individual and collective agency in response to the climate crisis. Compared to past analog media systems (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) and digital communication system of the last several decades (Jensen & Helles, 2023), these planetary systems represent a radical step change in the social applications of digital computing. Building on comparative quantitative and qualitative analysis of governmental and corporate documents from the three world regions driving the development of IoT, the third section develops a typology of the imaginaries informing

the development of its constitutive technologies, institutions, and practices. The concluding section anticipates coming debates on the controversies of how to do the right thing for the planet and other species while simultaneously observing the recognized rights of personal privacy for one species—humans. For scholarship and policy alike, the question is, at once, empirical and existential: Which kinds and degrees of surveillance, with what checks and balances, will the present human cohort be prepared to accept in the coming pivotal decades to ensure the livelihood of human and other species centuries and millennia into the future?

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SCI14 Sustainability

PP 1100 Sustainable science communication: Theoretical foundations, ethical perspectives and practical implications

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As it is accountable to society, science has a particular responsibility to communicate. The communication of scientific knowledge eventually constitutes a core element of public discourse, informing political and societal problem-solving processes (Druckmann et al. 2025). In a world characterised by multiple, intersecting crises, science may also be held responsible for contributing to their mitigation. In this context, sustainability (defined as social, ecological, and economic justice, (WCED 1987)) functions as a norm for reflecting on possible pathways towards crisis mitigation. Besides being a normative framework for research, the norm of sustainability also provokes reflections on the contribution of science communication to sustainable development.

Over recent years, communication research has extensively examined communication *for* sustainability—understood as communication aimed at supporting societal transformation towards sustainability—and has highlighted its intersections with science communication (Hoppe & Wolling 2017). However, a systematic conceptualisation of sustainability as a guiding norm for the practice and design, rather than merely as a topic of science communication, is still lacking. Our presentation addresses this gap proposing a concept of *sustainable science communication*, which we define as *processes of science communication that are designed in a sustainable way*. To explain this concept, we will present a matrix integrating examples of the potential and dilemmas of designing science communication sustainably.

This matrix of sustainable science communication provides examples of various forms of science communication formats and measures that are designed in a sustainable way. It is structured along different formats of science communication that differ notably in their degree of digital orientation—an aspect of particular relevance in sustainability debates: (1) online-digital formats, which take place entirely within digital environments; (2) offline-digital formats, in which digital tools support communication in physical settings; and (3) offline-non-digital formats, which rely exclusively on non-digital means and settings. Building on this, this matrix systematically maps the socio-ecological consequences and the associated potentials for the sustainable design of science communication. It differentiates science communication formats according to the three format types and across the three dimensions of sustainability—social, ecological and economic.

Presenting this matrix, we argue that the concept of sustainable science communication has the potential to enrich the field of science communication for several reasons: *First*, as a publicly funded domain, the communication of science can be understood as bearing a particular societal responsibility to act in the public interest and to organise its resources and mechanisms accordingly. *Second*, following years of intensive efforts to increase the quantity of science communication—driven by political actors, societal expectations and third-party funders—the field is now called upon to reflect more systematically on its quality. Sustainability offers a norm for quality assessment that is closely aligned with broader societal

discourses. *Third*, reflections from professional practice already indicate how closely communication for sustainability may be intertwined with sustainably designed communication.

SCI14 Sustainability

PP 1101 The scientific-political discourse on nuclear energy in Norway and Australia

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In this paper the scientific-political discourse of nuclear power in Norway will be compared to the Australian media discourse as presented in Altenkamp and McManus study "Nuclear power in a de-carbonised future? A critical discourse analysis of nuclear energy debates and media framing in Australia" (Altenkamp & McManus, 2024) within the methodological framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

An important insight from Altenkamp and McManus is how "climate change and energy security concerns" is keeping the issues on the agenda and reframing the whole energy discourse, but also how the discourse is a struggle of what is "good" science.

The Norwegian media being studied will correspond closely to the media selected by Altenkamp and McManus with 5 newspapers across the political spectrum being studied. In this paper only results from analysis of media content will be presented as this is the first step of a larger project.

Norway and Australia are both advanced, western economies and share some common features regarding energy: Both countries are big exporters of hydro-carbons, as Australia exports coal, while Norway exports petroleum-products. Thus both countries contribute to global warming, as other energy-hungry countries burn the coal, oil and gas.

Both Australia and Norway also have a very high level of renewable electric energy: Both have wind; Australia has sun, while Norway has hydro power.

When it comes to nuclear power the two countries are seemingly different. The current Australian government was elected on a programme to not introduce nuclear power in Australias energy-mix. In Norway the general sentiment towards nuclear power has shifted strongly in favour of nuclear power after 2020. In 2026 a governmental committee will give advice to the future of nuclear power in Norway.

The arguments for and against nuclear power have been heavily discussed internationally, but Norwegian media and the Norwegian public has mostly been disinterested in these matters, since nuclear power has not been considered a relevant option. Thus the opinion as well as most politicians seemingly were surprised and unprepared as the general opinion as well as local politicians loudly starting to promote nuclear power. Also supported by a small but vocal group of proponents of nuclear power, several with strong links to the oil- and gas industries.

The shift in the public opinion seems not to have changed substantially since 2023: The positive attitude towards nuclear power seems to be stable. But young people are more positive than older, men more positive than women and people on the right more positive than on the left. This is a general pattern also corresponding roughly to the findings in Australia and also in other countries.

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SCI14 Sustainability

PP 1102 Sustainable development in the communication of local government units with residents: Between technocracy and inclusivity

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Research Objective

The aim of this study is to analyse the communication strategies of local government units (LGUs) in the field of sustainable development (SD). The research focusses on the deconstruction of dominant narrative frames and the assessment of the level of inclusivity within the discourse, specifically regarding gender perspectives and marginalised social groups.

Theoretical assumptions

The first theoretical premise relates to communication on sustainable development, which is required to preserve an appropriate balance among three dimensions: Planet, Profit, and People (the Triple Bottom Line). If a local government focuses its communication exclusively on "profit" or solely on environmental actions such as "tree planting," while neglecting social dimensions (e.g., the exclusion of women, unequal access to public services), such communication must be regarded as theoretically inadequate and conceptually inconsistent with the Triple Bottom Line framework. The second assumption is grounded in Jürgen Habermas's theoretical framework, which postulates that communication between local government

and residents is not merely a unidirectional "transmission of information", but constitutes the formation of a public sphere. This public sphere is expected to be free from domination and characterized by inclusivity. When the language employed by local government actors is excessively complex or technocratic, or when it systematically marginalizes or renders women invisible (e.g., through the absence of feminist perspectives or gender-inclusive formulations), the administrative system can be said to "colonize the lifeworld," thereby blocking the conditions necessary for genuine dialogue and deliberation.

Methodology

The study adopts a multimodal approach, combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis with elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research sample covers the digital communication of 74 cities in the Silesian Voivodeship in 2025 and 2026. To evaluate the material, an original "Inclusive Index" was applied, operationalising variables such as the use of feminine job titles (femininitives), the representation of women in decision-making roles, cognitive accessibility (Plain Language) and digital accessibility (WCAG standards).

Problem Statement

This paper advances the argument that local governmental communication concerning sustainable development frequently undergoes a process of "technocratic closure," in which environmental and economic dimensions are prioritized over the social pillar. This communicative configuration generates a predominantly elitist discourse that marginalizes social groups possessing lower levels of cultural capital, while concurrently reproducing and reinforcing conventional gender roles within the public sphere.

Results and Conclusions

The analysis identifies "participatory gaps" in local communication. The findings indicate a necessity to redefine LGU communication strategies toward a participatory model that not only informs about the goals of the 2030 Agenda but actively engages diverse groups of residents in the transformation process of the region. The research tools developed herein can serve as a standard for civic monitoring (watchdogging) by non-governmental organisations and regulatory bodies.

SCI14 Sustainability

PP 1103 The aesthetic of excess: Unsustainable practices in influencer content

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Young people spend substantial time on social media and increasingly rely on it as their primary source of information. On platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, influencers interact with their followers daily by sharing their everyday lives, opinions, and recommendations. While greenfluencers promote sustainability and thus typically attract only small audiences, high-reach influencers, as commercially oriented actors whose business model relies on brand collaborations, are more likely to share content that aligns with the expectations of a broad, heterogeneous audience. Consequently, they may emphasize hedonistic lifestyles and avoid climate-related messages. Research indicates that frequent following of influencers is positively associated with materialism (Tuominen et al., 2023).

Although influencers' effects on their followers' attitudes and behavior have been studied, little is known about the environmental behavior they share with their audience when showing their everyday life. Thus, this study examines the individual environmental behavior of high-reach influencers in three domains: mobility, diet, and consumption. Since environmental attitudes and behavior correlate with gender (Brough et al., 2016), the study also aims to identify differences between male and female influencers.

A quantitative content analysis was conducted of all posts published by the 20 most popular German influencers, quoted by gender, on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube from May to July 2025. Influencers were identified via a pre-survey of 16- to 29-year-olds (n = 500). Due to the large amount of content, daily Instagram stories were recorded on working days using a rotating schedule, covering approx. a third of all stories. The final dataset comprised n = 2,559 units (896 posts, 1,663 stories). Automated image classification and keyword search were performed to pre-filter the material, identifying relevant content in 45% (n = 1,154) of the data. These units were then manually coded by two coders.

Mobility behavior appears in 16% of the total sample and is dominated by cars (67% in mobility-related posts, multiple coding), while public transport is rare (4%). Among car-related posts, 58% were created by male influencers. Diet-related elements were identified in 18% of the collected material. Of all dietary units, 9% show meat consumption, with a slightly higher share among male influencers (61% of meat display). Environmentally harmful food packaging is frequent, with plastic-packaged foods in 45% of all dietary posts. Advertisements and giveaways are featured in 19% of all units, primarily for food (35% in advertisements), technical equipment (31%), beauty products (20%), and fashion (13%).

The results illustrate that influencers' portrayals of their daily lives include several relevant aspects of environmental behavior, predominantly unsustainable practices. In the presentation, detailed results, further findings concerning gender differences and implications regarding the impact on followers will be discussed.

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TVS01 Representation, Visibility & Change

PP 0093 Repositioning public service television in a post-migrant society

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Television remains a central, though increasingly contested, infrastructure of democratic communication. In Germany, public service television is constitutionally mandated to contribute to democratic opinion formation, social cohesion, and cultural diversity by addressing all segments of society. Within this framework, integration is understood as enabling equal participation, visibility, and recognizability within the public sphere. This mandate has gained renewed relevance in a society shaped by sustained migration: around 30% of the population in Germany has a migration history, either through personal migration experience or parental migration (Mediendienst Integration, 2025). Migrant and post-migrant publics therefore constitute a structural component of contemporary television publics rather than marginal audience segments (Foroutan, 2019).

At the same time, television studies and audience research point to a growing discrepancy between this normative mandate and actual patterns of television use among migrant and post-migrant publics. While public service television continues to reach large parts of the majority population and long-established, German-speaking migrant audiences, it increasingly struggles to engage younger, recently immigrated, and transnationally oriented publics (Hasebrink, 2023). These publics often rely on diasporic and algorithmically curated media environments, contributing to fragmented and hybridised public spheres and parallel communicative spaces (PSM-AP, 2025).

Against this backdrop, the study examines how public service media in Germany re-articulate their democratic role as public service television within hybrid media environments shaped by sustained migration, platform capitalism, and increasingly hybrid communication ecologies (Couldry & Hepp, 2017). Conceptually, the study builds on television studies research that understands public service television as a democratic media institution embedded in platform-dominated ecosystems, whose legitimacy increasingly depends on its ability to connect linear broadcasting, on-demand services, and social media environments (Sehl, 2024; Doyle et al., 2025). The analysis is guided by the following research question: How do public service media in Germany reposition their democratic role within hybrid publics under conditions of sustained migration and platformisation?

Methodologically, the study adopts an institutional and analytical perspective and develops a systematic mapping of organisational and strategic responses pursued by German public service broadcasters. Drawing on policy documents, organisational reports, programme strategies, and existing empirical studies on migrants' media use and audience expectations, it examines which target-group-specific offerings, participatory formats, partnerships with migrant organisations, and cross-platform distribution strategies German PSM have developed, and how these strategies are oriented towards strengthening democratic values such as inclusion, participation, and recognition (SVR, 2023; Urbániková & Smejkal, 2025).

Looking ahead to future democratic media orders, the paper argues that PSM's role as a "democratic anchor institution" will depend on its capacity to (a) position itself within hybrid platform ecologies and (b) respond to the differentiated expectations of digital natives and migrant audiences across linear television, streaming services, and social media environments (Doyle et al., 2025; Sehl, 2024; SVR, 2023). As a democratic anchor institution, public service television can still provide a common frame of reference—but only if institutional structures and production logics are re-aligned with a public value orientation that prioritises epistemic quality and representational justice within hybrid television publics shaped by sustained migration.

TVS01 Representation, Visibility & Change

PP 0094 Mapping disability on the small screen: A qualitative content analysis into the representation of disability in Flemish fictional television programmes (2005–2025)

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Within disability studies, it is often argued that disability holds a crucial role in creating minority groups. Biological differences resulted in gender hierarchies, eugenics led to discriminatory notions of race, and medical pathologisations of homosexual people facilitated centuries of oppression. As a counterreaction, gender, critical race, and queer studies emerged during the twentieth century. Yet, what combined these disciplines, a foundation of bodily difference, often remained invisible and underexplored (Goodley, 2017; Mogk, 2013; Snyder & Mitchell, 2006), which led to the continuation of discrimination based on disability. Only since the 1980s, disability movements started addressing these acts of disablism. Importantly, they replaced individual, medicalised discourses with a nuanced understanding of disability rooted in oppressive social processes (Priestly, 2003; Twardowski, 2022). This led to disability studies, which "theorizes and historicizes … disability in similarly complex ways to the way race, class, and gender have been theorized" (Davis, 2006, p. XVI).

However, within media and television studies, directing attention towards disability has been a slow process (Ellcessor & Kirkpatrick, 2019). In Flanders, Belgium, a small but meaningful body of research exists (see Goethals, 2017; Vertoont, 2019; Vertoont et al., 2022), but significant questions remain unanswered. How are different kinds of disability represented on television? How do socio-cultural discourses on disability, located within either the individual, social or cultural model of disability, translate into representational practices? How do images of disability evolve throughout time? Specifically, as stressed by Ellis and Goggin (2015), there is a need for longitudinal studies.

Considering that fictional programmes in Flemish primetime television feature twice as many roles for disabled characters as non-fictional programmes (Vertoont, 2019), this study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how disability has been represented in Flemish television fiction over the past twenty years. Therefore, we will conduct an explorative, qualitative content analysis focusing on the overall representation of disability on television in Flemish fiction programmes. First, we will compile a database of Flemish television fiction produced between 2005 and 2025 that features main or recurring characters with disabilities. We rely on secondary sources such as television guides, articles, internet databases, and previous research on Flemish television fiction (for example, Vanlee et al., 2018) rather than an analysis of the actual television programmes. Second, we will study these series using a conventional qualitative content analysis (Maene, 2023) to map how disability and disabled characters are portrayed. This analysis will partly be guided by former studies on disability representation (Cumberbatch & Negrine, 1992) but will also allow room for new interpretations that are unique to Flemish television fiction.

With this study, we aim to provide a longitudinal overview of how disability has been represented in Flemish television fiction. Because of the topic's novelty, we approach disability in the broadest possible meaning of the word as we hope to demonstrate which disabilities have been explored in Flemish fiction and how.

TVS01 Representation, Visibility & Change

PP 0095 The representation and oppression of disabled characters in the fantasy genre of television and streaming programs

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Media content unquestionably influences society, as it can reinforce or deconstruct social views and perceptions, educate, or mediate representations of identity (Staiger, 2005) and make audiences confront their pre-existing biases or stereotypes of others (Donnelly, 2016). This study aims to examine an underexplored area of research: the representation and oppression (Cudd, 2006) of physically disabled characters in television and streaming shows in the genre of fantasy, described as a type of speculative fiction that incorporates magical elements (Timmerman, 1983; Oziewicz, 2017). Two research questions were addressed: RQ1: How are characters' interpersonal relationships, community involvement, personalities, and the frequency and forms of oppression they experience represented? How do the representations of these four themes influence each other? RQ2: What character arcs do disabled characters have, and what roles does their disability play in these stories that contribute to the fantasy genre?

The research examines character complexity and how heavily disability is connected to a character's representation building on and expanding the framework established by Black & Pretes (2007), and Hall's representation theory (2020). A textual analysis was conducted of 102 episodes across six globally popular or fancult fantasy genre shows, geared towards mature viewers (>18 years of age) and younger audiences (<18) in which 11 characters (protagonists, main, and minor characters) were analyzed. Furthermore, it examines the transformative and symbolic character arcs disabled characters are given using Veale's character arc theory (2014).

Findings reveal four aspects: 1. there is a considerable difference between character representation and oppression of characters in programs targeted toward younger audiences vs. mature viewers (>18), with greater levels of oppression in the latter; 2. characters were consistently represented as complex individuals not solely defined by- or reduced to their disabilities, with fully-developed personalities, close and intimate interpersonal relationships, and integration into their communities (using Black & Pretes' enhanced model for analysis). 3: characters had arcs that both centered or did not center around their disabilities, and their arcs were not confined to stories focused solely on their disabilities, and 4. The portrayal of magical healing in these character arcs did not follow typical ableist portrayals.

Overall, disabled characters were represented as complex, capable, developed individuals whose arcs were influenced by their disabilities but not severely limited by their disabled status. This contradicts the findings of many previous studies around disability (Hughes, 2009; Omiegbe & Ezehi (2023). The research in this paper also expands on the claim of fantasy allowing the rediscovery of awe and wonder, by showing fantasy's ability as a genre in facilitating discussion around sensitive real-world topics such as disability representation. Fantasy lets those creating it and interacting with it explore themes in the abstract and opens doors for discussion around the constructed representations of disability. In this way, it presents a unique contribution to the research landscape as it explores the influence of the fantasy genre and its traits on how disability is represented, and what possibilities it can present.

TVS01 Representation, Visibility & Change

PP 0096 Female creative leadership and fiction series in Spain after the arrival of transnational video-on-demand services (2017–2025)

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This study aims to provide a quantitative analysis of creative leadership in Spanish serialized fiction between 2017 and 2025 from a gender perspective, with the objective of determining the extent to which gender inequality between women and men persists or has diminished during this period. The production of television fiction in Spain constitutes a particularly relevant field for addressing this issue, given the significant boom the sector has experienced in recent years as a result of the consolidation of video-on-demand (VoD) services. This transformation has been driven both by local platforms—such as RTVE Play, Atresplayer, and Movistar+—and by transnational streaming services, including Netflix, Prime Video, and Disney+, which have reshaped production models, commissioning practices, and creative hierarchies within the audiovisual industry.

The study focuses on women's creative leadership in serialized fiction following the expansion of VoD services, using an original database that includes 347 series premieres released by players with national reach between 2017 and 2025. Creative leadership is examined through key roles such as creators, showrunners, and head writers. The results are analyzed through several complementary axes, including overall gender gaps in creative leadership, women's participation rates in series creation, differences according to commissioning broadcasters and platforms, variations across narrative genres, and the degree of originality of the projects (original concepts versus adaptations). This multidimensional approach makes it possible to identify patterns of inclusion and exclusion that are not immediately visible in aggregate data. In addition, the professional trajectories of female creators with more than one credit are examined in order to incorporate a more qualitative perspective.

The conclusions assess the extent of progress toward gender equality in the Spanish series industry during the period analyzed and identify the institutional, industrial, and cultural factors that contribute to the persistence of current inequalities. The findings offer empirical evidence that can inform public policy, industry practices, and future research on gender and creative labor in contemporary audiovisual production.

TVS01 Representation, Visibility & Change

PP 0097 Serial drama as a 'common third'. Research-action approaches to gender-related issues, audiovisual media and young adults in EU shifting grounds

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In the contemporary platform society – characterized by the dominance of streaming platforms, algorithmic recommendation systems and audiences' fragmentation – serial dramas play a fundamental role in shaping imaginaries about relevant social issues, standing out as powerful discursive spaces where norms, identities, and differences are negotiated. For this reason, the European Union has long recognised them as strategic tools for raising awareness on relevant social issues such as diversity and inclusion, which are highly controversial in a European landscape characterised by deep cultural and political tensions. The pillar role played by serial dramas in tackling gender stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive society is also reinforced when European strategies address the so-called "young adults" which, as digital natives, are particularly receptive to the symbolic power of these cultural products. Finally, European strategies pay particular attention to the pedagogical dimension, enhancing serial dramas as key agents in informal education, as they complement or sometimes contradict institutional teachings.

Based on the premises, our talk aims to detect the interplay between serial dramas, gender-related issues and European young audiences by presenting the final results of the EU CERV project GEMINI-Gender Equality through Media Investigation and New training Insights, which involved 4 European countries (Denmark, Ireland, Italy and Romania) differently labelled by the Gender Equality Index.

Content analysis on selected case studies revealed significant differences concerning how gender-related issues are portrayed on-screen. While serial dramas contribute to construct social meanings and, in some cases, challenge dominant narratives by offering alternative representations of gender roles, sexual identities, and intersectional experiences, the influence of global platforms raises questions about cultural homogenization, algorithmic bias, and the commercial imperatives that often prioritize visibility over authenticity. Transnational focus groups and survey on high school students showed that the problematic role of serial dramas in raising awareness and engaging audiences in critical thinking: while high school students recognize the social relevance of gender-related issues, they are less personally interested in them; meanwhile, serial dramas stand out as powerful tools in reinforcing already existing ideas rather than changing them. Finally, in depth

interviews with high schools' teachers and trainers revealed that, in a very fragmented European educational landscape, teachers are aware of the added value of using serial dramas as educational tools, but they have to deal with the challenges posed by national legal frameworks, cultural resistance and technological constraints

Based on these research findings, the GEMINI project suggests an innovative approach for creating a safe and productive learning environment in which gender and media literacy can be addressed. By using serial drama as a 'common third', this approach, based on the GMN triangle – a model designed to guide analysis of a specific series by focusing on gender representation, media communication, and narrative comprehension – fosters both security and engagement, both enabling students to explore gender-related issues while simultaneously developing their media literacy and providing teachers with an innovative and effective tool suitable to be embedded within different teaching paths.

TVS02 Changing television: Genres and Forms

PP 0198 Bite-sized storytelling: Reaching young audiences through short format scripted series. A view from Flanders

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In recent years, there has been increased attention to programming for young audiences, or teen television. Chiefly, Subscription Video-on-Demand (SVODs) such as Netflix have significantly changed the content landscape for young adults, exporting a genre historically tied to American television beyond the Anglo-Saxon world. Many other streamers have followed suit, developing titles specifically aimed at young audiences in an effort to diversify their content offerings and appeal to younger demographics. This strategic focus on teen television by global streamers places pressure on local television players in Europe. Furthermore, the industrial disruptions caused by SVODs highlight the specific challenges faced by local television players in the streaming age. First, the ability of SVODs to aggregate globally underserved audiences, such as young adults, allows streamers to invest in stories for niche audiences at levels and budgets difficult to sustain for broadcasters whose focus is on national audiences. Second, local television players also face structural pressures as viewing habits shift towards digital media consumption. Linear television viewing has declined steadily in recent years, particularly among young audiences, and broadcasters' shift to an online-first strategy has yet to compensate for these losses. Moreover, even where local broadcasters have developed digital or hybrid delivery models, their services compete within an expanded attention economy that includes SVODs as well as user-generated environments such as YouTube or gaming. Finally, particularly in smaller media markets, public and commercial funding is generally limited, which restricts experimentation and tends to favour investments in cost-intensive genres expected to generate the broadest possible appeal. As a result, production volume is generally lower than in larger markets, and volumes of specific niche content are considerably lower. Under these conditions, teen television is often treated as a niche category or displaced by formats designed for older demographics.

Nevertheless, recent research shows that local commissioning and production strategies for young audiences are changing. Particularly, short-format scripted series–hereafter short formats–emerge as a key way to engage young audiences and adapt to their changing viewing habits. Indeed, as younger viewers abandon linear television, broadcasters have recognised the need to adapt by offering more flexible and youth-oriented fiction. Moreover, short formats allow local broadcasters to leverage cultural and linguistic proximity while experimenting with new genres that can compete with global streamers' offerings. However, little is known about how broadcasters strategically manage short-format series within broader content catalogues, and how narrative structures, genres, and production values are adapted to ultra-short storytelling. Taking Flemish public and commercial broadcasters as a case study, this presentation first examines how these short formats are integrated into the content catalogues, commissioning, and branding strategies of Flemish television players; second, we explore which narrative and thematic structures emerge, and how global themes are adapted to local storytelling and mobile-first formats. Based on a mapping of domestic broadcasters' offerings and supplemented by an analysis of trade press and promotional material of these short formats, we identify broadcasters' changing production and distribution strategies for young audiences in the streaming age.

TVS02 Changing television: Genres and Forms

PP 0199 YouTube as a new "lawless city": Youth reception of the Spanish broadcast "La Casa de los Gemelos", a distortion of the classic "Big Brother" reality television format

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In a context of audience fragmentation and the declining centrality of traditional television among younger audiences (Sundet & Lüders, 2023), an event broadcast exclusively on YouTube and Kick in 2025 came to dominate social discussion about audiovisual content in Spain. This event was *La Casa de los Gemelos*, a "revision" or "free adaptation" of the *Big*

Brother format, which coincided with the lowest audience figures in the history of the twentieth Spanish edition of *Gran Hermano*, aired on the free-to-air channel Telecinco (Mediaset).

La Casa de los Gemelos was created by Madrid-based brothers Carlos and Daniel Ramos, known under the brand Zona Gemelos, with a strong presence on platforms such as Kick, where they stream online gambling-related content (Grosemans et al., 2024). The format reproduced several conventions of reality television, but introduced a defining and potentially harmful element: continuous unfiltered broadcasting without editorial mediation. Consequently, participant interactions frequently involved insults, verbal aggression, hate speech, and explicit references to drug use, for example. Most participants were viral social media figures without recognized professional status beyond their role as influencers.

The first edition was cancelled after only nine hours due to the seriousness of the incidents among participants, which required police intervention. A second edition (from 7 to 31 December 2025) achieved daily audience peaks close to one million viewers. It became a daily trending topic on X in Spain. The live broadcast of the New Year's Eve countdown attracted 2.7 million unique viewers, and further editions are planned for 2026. In response, Spain's main private free-to-air television groups, Atresmedia and Mediaset, devoted critical coverage to the format, emphasizing the deterioration of content aimed at young audiences and the reputational risks for brands advertising within a programme characterized by low production quality.

The aim of this paper is to explain and define the characteristics of this emerging format, and to conduct an audience research examining the ethical perceptions of Spanish secondary school students (aged 14–18) and university students (aged 18–22) regarding *La Casa de los Gemelos*. Using six focus groups (approximately 48 participants), we will explore how young audiences evaluate the legitimacy of digital content that reproduces, intensifies distorts reality television formats conventions, as well as differences in perception according to age and educational level. The findings will contribute evidence on the risks associated with deregulated platform environments such as YouTube, Twitch, and Kick. The research is part of the national project *AV-ADJUVEN* (PID2022-138281NB-C22), funded by the Spanish Government and the ERDF/EU.

TVS02 Changing television: Genres and Forms

PP 0200 Slow Reality TV: Making and engaging with Swedish public service television The Great Moose Migration

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This research focuses on transnational audiences for the slow TV phenomenon of *The Great Moose Migration* made by public service media SVT in Sweden. With over 9 million page impressions for the 2025 series, transnational audiences watched minute by minute for three weeks the forests, lakes and occasional moose on the move. This live event generates calm, green atmospherics, a slow burn reality that is affective, moving and strangely mesmerizing. The research draws on production interviews with the documentary filmmakers of the series and transnational audience interviews to understand first, the making of engagement for slow reality television with public service values, e.g. non commercial interests; and second, intensities of audience engagement with slow reality and its affective atmospherics. How and why do transnational audiences engage with slow reality about forestry, nature and the environment?

The talk situates this production and audience research in the context of shifting grounds for reality within public service television. Representations of the real and engagement with factual, reality and entertainment genres face multilevel challenges in media environments. According to John Corner (see Nash et al 2025), in recent work on documentary, reality and factuality can be understood in a post referential frame of reference. Post referentiality means that public engagement with witnesses and accounts of real events, or experts and explanations of scientific knowledge struggle to maintain referentiality in the real world. The unusual path of slow reality TV about natural environments is a striking example of how public service television responds to post referentiality. If the integrity of the real is unmoored from its mediated factual and trust based settings, why is this television series resonating with transnational audiences? And what role does slow reality play in shaping new pathways in referential integrity? This research addresses these challenging questions, exploring how professional producers and audiences understand values in slow atmospherics, referentiality, forestry and the environment for slow reality television.

TVS02 Changing television: Genres and Forms

PP 0201 Legitimizing streaming platforms in Turkey: Industry-reflexive series as strategic productions

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A new wave of Turkish content emerged shortly after the launch of local and global streaming platforms in Turkey in 2016 and challenged the globally successful formula of Turkish TV series that broadcast on mainstream television channels. Compared to the mainstream productions, the new generation of Turkish series has been featuring significantly shorter episodes and seasons (Vitrinel & Ildır, 2021) and experimenting with different genres, styles, and storytelling practices (Yörükoğlu & Akçalı, 2020). Beyond their narrative and stylistic qualities, these streaming series have also been perceived as distinct from their counterparts on mainstream television due to their relative freedom from state censorship. Through

these distinguishing features, these productions have been discursively positioned as an 'alternative' to the Turkish TV series on mainstream channels (Ildır & Çelik, 2021), targeting a more 'sophisticated' audience (Arslan &Tetik, 2021).

By conceptualizing the Turkish television industry as a Bourdieusian 'cultural field' (Lindell, 2024), this paper argues that such a discourse of distinction reflects an ongoing struggle for positions within the industry, in which streaming platforms seek to legitimize their status by building hierarchies based on artistic value, creative autonomy, and claims to higher professional standards. Within this context, industry-reflexive television series, which have emerged as a persistent genre on streaming platforms in Turkey, can be approached as strategic productions, through which streaming platforms seek to establish legitimacy within the field. Created by showrunners with professional backgrounds in mainstream Turkish television across different roles, these series use comedy to expose the 'flawed' practices in Turkish TV series production while simultaneously positioning streaming platforms as appropriate sites to reveal insider knowledge about the industry.

Based on this theoretical framework, the paper analyzes both the narrative discourses of industry-reflexive series across various streaming platforms, including *Me, Bartu* (HBO Max, 2018), *Ethos* (Netflix, 2020), *Between the World and Us* (Disney+, 2022), *Audition* (HBO Max, 2023), and *Background Actor* (Tabii, 2024) and the discourses articulated by showrunners in public interviews about their production processes. In this way, the paper intends to investigate the kinds of knowledge these series produce about the established industrial practices in the mainstream Turkish TV series production and argues how this insider knowledge contributes to the construction of streaming platforms' positions within the field of Turkish television industry.

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TVS02 Changing television: Genres and Forms

PP 0202 International sports documentaries broadcast in Spain from a gender perspective (2018–2025): A return to the past

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The production of sports documentaries has experienced exponential growth in recent years (Sarkar & Jyotsna, 2023), far surpassing that of fictional series and films addressing similar themes. This quantitative increase justifies the need for a systematic analysis from a gender perspective, particularly within a context shaped by the supposed paradigm shift in sports-related audiovisual fiction identified in recent research (Tous-Rovirosa et al, 2023; 2026), as well as by the social impact of audiovisual narratives on audiences. Previous studies have warned of the persistence of a hegemonic representation of white, heterosexual masculinity, in which women, LGBTIQ+ identities, and BIPOC communities occupy marginal or exceptional positions (Oates, 2017; Darda & Davis, 2023).

The present study analyzes a corpus of 345 sports documentaries broadcast in Spain between 2018 and 2025, of both national and international origin. Based on an ad hoc analytical framework—developed from the authors' previous research—a set of variables was coded with the aim of examining gender representation across different OTT platforms and TV channels and its relationship with the gender of the director. Coding was conducted using Excel, drawing on the IMDb and FilmAffinity databases, as well as institutional sources, and the statistical analysis was carried out using the PSPP software.

The results show that sports documentaries represent, from a gender perspective, a return to traditional approaches and even a regression when compared to sports TV series. Protagonism is predominantly male, concentrated in male figures, whether individual (36.5%) or ensemble-based (39.4%). The predominant target audience is adult (87.5%), football constitutes the central sport (37.7%), and the main thematic focus revolves around values of self-improvement and resilience (47.8%), which suggests a relationship between resilience and eudamony (Baldwin & Bantle). Direction is overwhelmingly male (73.9%), and the main producing countries are Spain (43.8%) and the United States (29.3%).

Despite the enactment in Spain of the LGCA (Law 13/2022 of 7 July), aimed at fostering and promoting women in directorial positions, no observable effects of this legislation are detected in Spanish productions, which display problems similar to those found in international content.

The relationship between the gender of the director and protagonism reveals a strong gender homology: 79.4% of productions featuring male protagonists are directed by men, while individual female protagonism accounts for only 4.7% of works directed by men. Women directors represent just 7.2% of the total, and their works show a more balanced distribution of protagonism and account for 34.8% of individual female protagonisms and 57.1% of female ensembles.

Platform-based analysis indicates that Netflix (21,7%) and Movistar (22%) clearly reproduce male bias, whereas Prime Video, Disney+, and smaller platforms such as Filmin offer slightly greater female visibility. Platforms with a higher volume of titles are those that display the most hegemonically masculine bias.

It is concluded that sports documentaries promote a narrative of self-improvement and resilience centered on male representation, with a strong dominant pattern, which only varies in the case of minority platforms or in the scarce cases in which women occupy directorial roles, and it is related to the minimal representation of "other" minorities...

TVS04 Between Dependency and Hybridisation: European Broadcasters Navigating Platform Power

PN 27 The search for reach and revenue: Responses of commercial European broadcasters to streamers

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This paper examines how Europe's commercial television sector has responded to the disruptive rise of digitalisation and global streaming services. The convergence of ad-skipping technologies, delayed viewing, and the shift of advertising to digital platforms eroded the traditional pillars of linear broadcasting—audience concentration, scheduling control, and advertising revenue. Despite extensive scholarship on public service media, research on commercial broadcasting in Europe remains limited. Aside from comparative work such as the Private Television in Western Europe collection (Donders et al., 2013), few studies have systematically examined how commercial broadcasters are responding to changes in the media industries, across Europe. Theoretically, this study draws on three complementary frameworks: Napoli's (1998) model of strategic responses, as adapted by D'Arma et al. (2021); Evens and Donders' (2018) framework of platform power; and the concept of platformisation (Nieborg & Poell, 2018; Poell et al., 2019), increasingly used to examine strategic change in public service media (Iordache et al., 2024; Johnson et al., 2025). The analysis combines aggregated industry data, trade press coverage, and recent academic research to map how commercial broadcasters adapt to global competition and the wider digital transformation of the audiovisual sector. The paper discusses four interlinked strategies through which European commercial broadcasters have responded: (1) diversification of revenue streams, (2) developing online portals, (3) scale through concentration and collaboration, and (4) advocating for regulation. European commercial broadcasters have responded through a complex interplay of diversification, platformisation, and consolidation, each reflecting an effort to reconcile economic sustainability with continued cultural relevance. Diversification involved expanding income sources beyond linear advertising: developing advertising video-on-demand, subscription video-on-demand, and hybrid freemium models; investing in digital advertising technologies; and extending commercial activities into data services, content licensing, and brand partnerships. Platformisation—the process through which broadcasters adopt the technological and operational logics of global streaming—saw traditional channels reinvent themselves as multi-platform ecosystems, controlling user interfaces, data infrastructures, and on-demand catalogues. Consolidation, in turn, sought to restore scale and bargaining power in an environment where both audiences and advertisers diminished. Finally, they sought regulatory change to safeguard their position and impose comparable obligations on streamers, lobbying for measures to 'level the playing field' and forming alliances with public broadcasters to call for prominence and discoverability. These strategies have been as much defensive as innovative, driven by the need to survive in markets dominated by global platforms with deeper pockets and transnational reach. Many broadcasters embraced experimentation and short-term pragmatism, illustrating a fragmented landscape of approaches, shaped by both market pressures and regulatory interventions. Ultimately, Europe's commercial television sector stands at a crossroads between adaptation and dependency.

TVS04 Between Dependency and Hybridisation: European Broadcasters Navigating Platform Power

PN 28 The challenges to the external television production industry in small markets in the context of an online public service media trajectory

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Recent contributions to research on how public service media (PSM) in Europe are transforming to online PSM show that the competition for audiences with global video-on-demand services (VoD) in different national contexts challenge their content strategies and publishing practices (e.g. Iordache et al. 2024; Bruun et al. 2025; Donders 2021). This paper contributes to this body of research but from the perspective of the external television production industry in a small market such as Denmark. The focus is on the relationship between the external production industry and TV 2 Denmark as

the company is a publisher-broadcaster and the biggest commissioner of original Danish television programmes. TV 2 has profound structural power in the local production industry. In recent years, the external production industry itself has undergone a process of either merging with international production companies or merging into larger groups to counter this structural power (Bruun 2010; Doyle 2023; Doyle et al. 2021). However, the local companies must be sustainable despite this organisational strategy. The paper argues that TV 2's current content strategies entail a radical shift in commissioning compared to the multi-channel era of television, which intensifies the competition in the external production industry. Furthermore, it changes the creative playing field, as the risk-taking behaviour of the public service company is also changing (Bruun and Lassen forthcoming; Bruun forthcoming). The paper outlines the recent development in the national external production industry and includes a case study of two typical production companies: Blu Productions part of Fremantle and owned by RTL group, and Monday Media Group, a network company active in the Nordic Countries and The Netherlands. The paper builds on interviews with the professionals and document analysis, e.g., calls for programmes, content strategic documents, programmes commissioned and trade press. Based on these data, the paper investigates the impact of TV 2's content strategies, and whether the small market or other factors such as number of customers, language and public service policies can explain the patterns found on the Danish market. Furthermore, the development in commissioning strategies call for a new interpretation and implementation of core public service values and broadcasters' needs by the external production companies with an impact on their creative work and the kind of cultural production they provide.

TVS04 Between Dependency and Hybridisation: European Broadcasters Navigating Platform Power

PN 29 "This programme is now available to streamcast". When legacy media meet platforms: Italian TV broadcasters between resistance and hybridisation

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Over the past decade, the emergence and proliferation of video-on-demand services and digital platforms has had a profound impact on the traditional television supply chain, transforming production and distribution practices as well as the industry's revenue streams (Lotz, 2022). Building on the concept of "streamcasting" (Scaglioni, 2025) – a synthesis of the features of traditional broadcasting, such as scheduled programming, and the new digital properties introduced by portals, such as on-demand viewing and the collection and management of first-party data (Johnson, 2019) – and recent empirical academic research (Ce.R.T.A., 2025), the paper analyses the "resistance and adaptation" strategies (D'Arma et al., 2021) adopted by legacy Italian broadcasters in the current platformised media economy, focusing in particular on public service media company Rai. The paper focuses on three interconnected issues within the current national media scenario: (1) the hybridisation of distribution patterns between linear and on-demand, particularly for valuable content such as scripted TV series, in a peculiar national context where linear viewing remains a crucial part of the audiovisual economy; (2) cross-platform extensions and touchpoints (on both proprietary web spaces and third-party platforms) to increase reach among core target audiences who have moved away from traditional broadcasting; (3) editorial rebranding of assets such as on-demand libraries and online properties, in order to align with market pressures. The strategies adopted by Rai in response to these issues all address an urgent yet unavoidable need: the adaptation of the public service mission that has guided the PSM's broadcasting operations for a century, in an arena that is evolving rapidly with the emergence of new digital competitors. From a methodological point of view, the paper takes a mixed-methods approach. This incorporates policy and industrial paper analysis (Iordache et al., 2024), as well as aggregated economic and audience figures for linear and digital properties over the last few years, qualitative case studies, and interviews with Rai executives. The ultimate goal is to develop a typology of the "streamcasting" strategies adopted by Rai, based on an interpretative framework that considers the recurrent tensions between the PSM's mission and the ever-changing, platformised economy and society. The paper makes two valuable contributions to the body of knowledge in television studies. Theoretically, its aim is to establish a connection between the tradition of television studies and the paradigm of platformisation. It demonstrates how linearity is not just an outdated legacy; rather, it can become a valuable cultural resource in a highly platformised media economy. Furthermore, it shows how broadcasting features can be effectively combined with the properties of VOD services. From an empirical point of view, it illustrates the specific strategies, routines, and experiments of an Italian legacy media company. It focuses on instances of "resistance" (defence of schedules and programming practices; brand safety and content diversity) and "adaptation" (increasing digital touchpoints to capture additional reach, and developing on-demand and digital-first libraries).

TVS04 Between Dependency and Hybridisation: European Broadcasters Navigating Platform Power

PN 30 The dilemma of YouTube-presence: Two Danish perspectives on legacy broadcasters' content distribution on third-party platforms

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This paper examines the difficult dependency on third-party platforms faced by public service media (PSM) organisations, when they choose to distribute their content on video sharing platforms and social media. The focus of the paper are

two Danish legacy broadcasters, DR and TV 2, both of which are currently strengthening their presence on third-party platforms. Each broadcaster has launched – or is about to launch – new five-year strategies, addressing challenges related to, among other issues, competition, appropriation of new technology, and changing user habits. While both organisations enjoy a high reach within the general population, they struggle, as most other legacy media, to reach and engage younger audiences. Their response is a strategic decision to prioritise a stronger presence on third-party platforms such as YouTube. As described by Johnson et al. (2025), distribution on third-party platforms requires balancing the imperative to reach younger audiences with substantial challenges of distributing content on platforms, which are subject to very different rules and norms. Among these challenges are lack of transparency in content visibility, limited access to data, challenged communication with the platforms, and for commercial broadcaster also compromising their business model from linear and/or VoD distribution (ibid., p. 20). Also, the risk of offering PSM content alongside harmful content raises ethical concerns. Methodologically, the paper draws on analyses of strategy and policy documents as well as interviews with key players from the two organisations. It asks what the broadcasters' rationale is for deciding on more third-party distribution and considers how the challenges and solutions differ (or are alike) between the two broadcasters operating within the same media system with similar public service ambitions but with different business models. The paper contributes to the study of the digital transformation of PSM by addressing widely known challenges within the context of strong public media in the Nordic countries. As Syvertsen et al. (2014) observe, PSM organisations in the Nordic countries have traditionally been well-funded and supported by the public and politically. The paper discusses how distribution via third-party platforms may risk undermining this support, thus questioning the PSM raison d'être in the public. Key words: public service media, digital distribution, Nordic media, platform dependency, corporate strategy.

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TVS04 Between Dependency and Hybridisation: European Broadcasters Navigating Platform Power

PN 31 The cost of staying in the game: Fiction budgets and platform power in Italian legacy television

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Over the past decade, the Italian television market has been reshaped by the entry of global streaming platforms, producing a multipolar environment in which legacy broadcasters and digital-native players coexist and compete (Scaglioni 2024). While platform impact has often been analysed through the lenses of circulation, visibility and algorithmic gatekeeping, or cultural diversity (cf. Curtin et al. 2014, Beschiera et al., 2017, Hesmondhalgh & Lotz 2020, Grece & Tran 2023, Idiz et al. 2025), less academic attention has been paid to how it operates upstream, reshaping the budgets of scripted production. This paper addresses this gap by examining production costs as a key site where platform-induced benchmarks intersect with legacy broadcasting strategies. Adopting a system-level perspective, the paper analyses the Italian scripted production landscape (cf. Buonanno 2012), focusing on Rai, Mediaset, and Sky as a historically rooted legacy ecosystem responding to the scale, risk profiles, and commissioning norms introduced by global streamers such as Netflix and Prime Video. Empirically, the analysis draws on an original dataset of over 600 Italian scripted titles – including series seasons, miniseries, and long-running serial formats – first released on linear television and OTT services from 2020 onwards. A distinctive feature of the Italian case is the availability of title-level production budgets, self-declared by producers and collected by the Italian Ministry of Culture. These data are combined with information on IP ownership and adaptation status, genres, formats, renewals, evidence from industry reports, and European circulation data from the Lumière VOD database (cf. Bengesser et al. 2024). Together, they enable a comparative analysis of total budgets, cost per minute, commissioning patterns, and subsequent circulation across linear and on-demand environments. After outlining the key characteristics and production trends of Italian broadcasters in a context of streamers' co-opetition, the paper identifies recurrent production and editorial regimes across the legacy system – high-end drama, mainstream generalist series, long-running low-cost formats, digital-first experiments, etc. By conceptualising production budgets as a sensitive seismograph of industrial change, we offer a case study of how public service media and commercial broadcasters negotiate value, risk, and reach in Italy's multipolar market, while outlining a methodological template that can be extended to other European systems.

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TVS05 Audiovisual Streaming: Data, Audiences & Production

PP 0541 From data asymmetry to data lore: Effects of audience data on authorship and production relationships in the Finnish television industry

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Television and streaming industries are permeated by data and metrics. With the streaming platforms, the abundant and detailed audience data reshapes the power structures of the television industry. Creative workers' and production companies' dependence on data owned by streaming platforms has made these platforms significant gatekeepers in the industry (Ibid & Poell 2025). Viewer ratings and the knowledge of viewer segments have long guided the production and commissioning of television series, but with the collection of streaming data, television and streaming industries have considerably more detailed information to support decision-making about how, when and who consumes their content (Doyle 2018; Kelly 2019). Despite the growing amount of data, one trend in the industry has been the culture of data secrecy (Navar-Gill 2020; Rasmussen 2024).This shift related to the asymmetry of data availability can be seen as a continuation of the power imbalance between creatives and commissioners, but it also entails new manifestations of how creatives perceive the expectations placed on their productions by commissioners.

Our goal is to examine the relationship between data secrecy and "being data-driven" (see Navar-Gill 2020) and how they both affect understandings of authorship in the television production culture. We focus on what meanings both creatives and commissioners assign to the audience data and how they see the relevance of data in their creative decision-making. We also consider how the current industry lore is built around data access and data imaginary. Our research material consists of interviews collected in 2023 and 2024 with 32 television industry professionals working in Finland. 25 of them represented creatives (screenwriters, directors, producers, script supervisors) and seven represented professionals working as commissioners in the Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle, streaming services or television networks.

Our reflexive thematic analysis illustrates that audience data plays a key role in the development processes and commissioning decisions of television series, but creatives do not have clearly agreed access to data collected from their own productions. The data and its potential uses seem to both weaken and strengthen creatives' authorship. From the creatives' perspective, data secrecy and opacity of data interpretation cause confusion. In the absence of information, they are prone to guess the effects of data and its intended use: beliefs and imaginations of data produce specific data lore that is part of streaming lore (Burroughs 2019) and a continuation of the industry lore (Havens 2008). While industry lore consists of insider information, unspoken rules and experience-based knowledge about the prevailing operating cultures and viewer preferences, data lore prioritizes assumptions and speculation about the role of data in decision-making of television industry actors. However, access to audience data is assumed to provide useful ways to navigate a competitive and uncertain working environment, furthering the prevalence of data lore.

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TVS05 Audiovisual Streaming: Data, Audiences & Production

PP 0543 Scheduling Netflix: On the remediation of viewing routines in the streaming video on-demand era

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Television studies continue to understand broadcast television viewing as structured through schedules, genres, and channels that organise how audiences engage with content (Ellis, 1982; Ellis, 1990). Streaming platforms such as Netflix frequently position themselves as breaking from these logics through narratives of alt-genres and post-demographic taste communities, personalisation and on-demand viewing (Elkins, 2019; Frey, 2021). This study explores these narratives and argues that viewing behaviour, rather than being hyper-individualised, continues to be organised through schedule-like routines and conventions familiar from broadcast television. Netflix's recommendation system, rather than disrupting these conventions, acts as a broad framework within which these routines are practised.

Drawing on computational analysis of approximately 285,000 viewing events from 126 Dutch Netflix users, collected through data donations and linked with demographic survey data (Van Es & Nguyen, 2025), this study examines viewing behaviour and how it is organised across time and content type. We combine temporal analysis of viewing activity with network analysis of Netflix's catalogue and video-to-video recommendation system (Gomez-Uribe & Hunt, 2015). Beyond genre and mood labels, we structure the catalogue into algorithmically derived "metadata clusters": 22 modularity-based communities ($Q \approx 0.6$) built from video-to-video recommendations. These groupings reflect how Netflix operationalises video-to-video similarity, enabling a detailed comparison of viewing behaviour over time along genre and recommender-based classifications.

The paper has three main findings. First, Netflix viewing follows a repetitive weekly rhythm with distinct daily patterns, such as evening "prime-time"-like concentration and early-morning children's content viewing. What users watch is not best described by genre categories alone, but by the recommender-system-derived metadata clusters, which provide a clearer organising structure than genre tags when observing viewing behaviour.

Second, when we structured individual viewing behaviour into a weekly 'what-they-watched-when' schedule, a visual analysis identified four distinct viewing routines within the sample. A modularity analysis of viewing behaviour, examining which users watched which types of content throughout the week, showed that these groups of users were sufficiently distinct in their behaviour ($Q \approx 0.3$). Each of these behavioural groups showed significant demographic differences in age and gender. Group 1 was predominantly middleaged men ($N = 36$, Age $\mu \approx 47$, 80.6% M), Group 2 was predominantly middle-aged women ($N = 21$, Age $\mu \approx 42$, 76.2% F), Group 3 was predominantly younger adults with no significant gender difference ($N = 33$, Age $\mu \approx 36$), and Group 4 ($N = 9$, Age $\mu \approx 42$) appeared to be sporadic viewers that mostly watched only a single type of content.

Third, we show that following direct title-to-title recommendations is rare; instead, users follow broader paths between spaces of recommendation, within which they exercise their agency. While users rarely follow direct video-to-video recommendations (1.37%), their movement between titles aligns closely with the weighted directional relationships in the higher-level metadata clusters of the video-to-video recommender graph (63%). These findings suggest that Netflix, rather than prescribing what to watch next, organises content into spaces of recommendation within which users reproduce routine viewing patterns.

TVS05 Audiovisual Streaming: Data, Audiences & Production

PP 0544 Content prominence and its impact on circulation diversity and viewership on a PSM VOD service

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In response to the rise of on-demand consumption, most public service media (PSM) organisations have launched their own video-on-demand (VOD) services over the last decades. While the viewership of these services is on the rise, traditional linear TV viewership is declining. Such a shift in consumption of TV content may pose challenges for PSM in sustaining diverse patterns of consumption. At the same time, although prominence has become a central issue in platform regulation and policy debates, empirical research has typically focused either on VOD catalogue composition or on interface description, leaving the relationship between content prominence and viewership underexplored. This paper addresses this gap by analysing how content prominence affects viewership and how it structures circulation diversity on Estonian Public Broadcasting's (ERR) VOD service. Circulation diversity refers to the diversity that emerges as content moves from catalogue (available diversity) to interface visibility (exposure diversity) and finally to viewership (consumed diversity).

The study combines a longitudinal dataset comprising daily measurements over a full year (June 2024–May 2025) with interviews conducted with ERR's VOD editorial team. Quantitative data include catalogue composition, content prominence, viewership, and linear TV scheduling data, and content metadata. For each title, daily prominence, TV broadcast recency, and VOD premiere recency scores were computed, and viewership figures were collected. Circulation diversity was assessed by comparing the distribution of content types, origins, and production years across catalogue, exposure, and viewership levels. Regression analysis examined the explanatory power of prominence, broadcast recency, and premiere recency in predicting viewership.

The findings show that although ERR's VOD catalogue is diverse and well-balanced (with strong representation of cultural, factual, and domestic content), exposure and viewership patterns diverge substantially from this catalogue-level diversity. Acquired scripted series and feature films receive disproportionately high prominence, and their dominance is even more pronounced in viewership outcomes. Long-term availability emerges as an important enabling VOD affordance: although only 36% of available titles are watched on an average day, 99% receive viewership across the whole year. Yet regression analysis demonstrates that once content prominence and premiere recency are accounted for, duration of availability exerts only a weak negative effect, and broadcast recency loses its apparent positive influence. Overall, the visibility of content (prominence) and the novelty of content (premiere recency) explain most of the variance in viewership ($R^2 = 0.62$).

Interviews with ERR's editors contextualise these dynamics, revealing curational work as a balancing act between PSM value commitments, resource constraints, linear scheduling rhythms, and audience expectations shaped by global commercial

VOD services. Although editors aim to promote diversity, their decisions remain influenced by popularity, novelty, rights windows, and residual linear logics, producing tensions between PSM missions and commercial VOD logics.

The study contributes empirical evidence to ongoing debates on prominence, discoverability, and PSM platformisation. It demonstrates that content prominence is a central, but not exhaustive, driver of viewership, and shows how content diversity is progressively reshaped as it moves from availability to viewership. Evaluating PSM VOD services therefore requires analysing availability, exposure, and consumption jointly rather than in isolation.

TVS05 Audiovisual Streaming: Data, Audiences & Production

PP 0545 Beyond the streaming black box: Navigating data secrecy and access in media industries research

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Global streaming services have reshaped the media landscape introducing disruptive business and distribution models. Moreover, they have shifted to unprecedented data collection and management. Streaming giant Netflix, for example, has been identified as a "black box when it comes to data" (Idiz et al. 2021, 437) due to its "data secrecy" (Rasmussen 2024). This includes not only the data generated by users on their platforms, but a broader range of data related to their various practices. With increased production budgets and a shrinking number of commissions in the age of streaming, data access has become even more essential to producers, legacy players in the screen industry, and policymakers. Screen industry workers need performance insights for future contract negotiations (Navar-Gill 2020; Idiz and Poell 2024). Policy makers across Europe rely on production and investment data to assess the need and effectiveness of national investment obligations (Hagedoorn and Becker 2025). For media and communication scholars various forms of data access are essential to map and theorize these developments, and assist policy makers with empirical insights on the transformation of the screen industry.

In line with the conference theme "shifting grounds," this paper examines how researchers navigate the opacity of the streaming "black box" in the screen industries, marked by data secrecy and strategic selective disclosure (Van Es 2024). Building on critiques of the transparency ideal, we reconceptualize data access as an ongoing, relational process. Drawing on multi-sited and mixed-method research from previous studies, it maps the shift to this fragmented terrain of data access across research into *production*, *platforms*, and *policy*. By synthesizing these previously siloed approaches, we identify shared challenges, valuable sources, and innovative as well as tried-and-true methods for circumventing industry secrecy. It concludes by proposing a framework for streaming video research founded on collaboration, industry partnerships, and reciprocity, addressing the infrastructural shifts and ethical limits of open science in the streaming era.

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TVS06 Entertainment Television: Practices & Politics

PP 0646 25 years later – How Big Brother changed the global television landscape

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When we think back to the year 2000, it turned out that not all computers crashed at the turn of the millennium, and that the national and global television landscape was still very different. In spring of 2000 a Dutch television format initially in Germany and then in 62 television markets worldwide shocked the public. The reality show format *Big Brother* by production company Endemol appeared not only on television screens, but also on other screens, permanently changing the television landscape.

Big Brother illustrates five developments in television that began in the Netherlands and Germany:

1. *Big Brother* can be seen as a blueprint for other reality TV formats, which have experienced a real boom and are now an integral part of television (and streaming) programming (Chalaby 2016 and 2023).
2. *Big Brother* and the boom of Reality TV formats, the global format trade experienced enormous growth rates (Havens 2006; Mikos 2020; Moran 2009).
3. This format trade sparked a new dynamic in the acquisition of IP and licensing rights, leading to numerous company takeovers (Esser 2016).
4. The example of Big Brother illustrates how media convergence between the traditional media industry, telecommunications and the tech industry work. The format made marketing, merchandising and multi-screen exploitation important (Sparviero etal. 2017).
5. The expansion of format trading was accompanied by fragmentation both on the supply side (number of television stations and channels, streaming services) and on the audience side (niche audiences, different preferences in different milieus), who live in a 'society of singularities' (Athique 2016; Reckwitz 2020).

Even though *Big Brother* was not predicted to have a long lifespan in 2000, the format still exists today. Looking back on the last 25 years of television development, it must be said that *Big Brother* was innovative in many ways, both in terms of format and the reality TV genre, as well as in terms of marketing and the structure of the value chain. *Big Brother* has changed the production and distribution of television formats as well as the advertising and marketing formats for programmes. In my paper, I will analyse these five developments in detail.

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TVS06 Entertainment Television: Practices & Politics

PP 0647 Entertainment television as a site of memory politics: The case of the Intervision Song Contest 2025

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In September 2025, Russia staged the Intervision Song Contest (ISC) in Moscow, presenting it as the revival of a supposedly forgotten television tradition and as a cultural counterweight to the Eurovision Song Contest, from which Russia has been excluded since 2022. This paper analyses ISC 2025 as a televisual memory project and argues that the contest functioned as a politically instrumentalised construction of cultural continuity through media spectacle. Building on the memory concepts developed by Assmann and Assmann (1994) and on approaches to media memory articulated by Erll (2011), the paper conceptualises the ISC as a medial act of remembrance through which a usable past was produced for contemporary political agendas.

Historically, the Intervision Song Contest never constituted a continuous or stable television format. Although various music festivals in socialist Eastern Europe during the 1960s and 1970s were retrospectively labelled "Intervision Song Contests" in Western discourse, only two competitions officially carried this title: the Prague-based contest launched in 1965 and the Sopot-based contest held between 1977 and 1980. Both were short-lived and ended amid political upheavals, notably the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981 (Vuletic 2019; Yurtaeva-Martens 2025). Neither contest was hosted by the Soviet Union itself, situating ISC 2025 within a historically discontinuous tradition shaped by political rupture rather than continuity.

Empirically, the paper follows a three-part analytical approach conducted between January and November 2025. First, it analyses the framing of ISC 2025 by Russian state actors and state-aligned media, focusing on how the contest was positioned as a marker of historical and cultural continuity. Second, it examines international news coverage to trace how the event was interpreted and contextualised outside Russia, particularly in relation to geopolitical narratives. Third, it investigates non-state-curated online reactions by Russian audiences in order to assess how the official framing resonated in public reception.

While Russian state media consistently framed the ISC as a return to an internationalist cultural legacy, non-state-curated online reactions showed little engagement with the historical narrative of Intervision. Instead, public discussion focused on

issues such as the event's funding, comparisons with the Eurovision Song Contest, and critical assessments of the appropriateness of staging a lavish entertainment spectacle amid Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine. In this context, the contest was widely perceived as an attempt to project normality and cultural vitality under conditions of war and international isolation. International media coverage echoed this reading, predominantly interpreting the ISC as a geopolitically charged media event (see Morton 2025).

The study concludes that ISC 2025 highlights the limits of state-driven televisual memory construction. As a case study, it demonstrates how television formats can be mobilised within contemporary memory politics and how such efforts can remain ineffective when confronted with historical discontinuity, geopolitical realities, and audience reception. In doing so, the study contributes to television and memory studies by showing how contemporary entertainment formats operate as sites of state-led memory politics in politically charged contexts.

TVS06 Entertainment Television: Practices & Politics

PP 0648 Comfort Viewing in an Age of Crisis: TV series as security blankets for (young) audience

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The rewatching of television series has become a widespread and meaningful consumption practice among young audiences in the contemporary streaming ecosystem, characterized by an unprecedented abundance of available content. This paper approaches rewatching through the lens of affect theory, situating it as a form of comfort viewing that responds to the affective conditions of media saturation and choice overload that shape audience experience, especially young one. Rather than understanding rewatching as a nostalgic impulse or a resistance to novelty, the study conceptualizes it as an affective strategy through which viewers actively manage emotional states, cognitive fatigue, and the pressures of constant cultural availability.

Drawing on affect theory and on the premises of Eva Illouz's *Explosive Modernity* (2024), the paper argues that rewatching operates as a stabilizing practice within an environment defined by acceleration, excess and discomfort. Familiar television series provide predictable narrative rhythms, known emotional trajectories, and established character relationships, allowing young viewers to engage with media in ways that reduce uncertainty, mitigate decision fatigue and are used as comfort experiences. In contrast to the affective demands of discovering new content—often accompanied by algorithmic pressure to keep up, optimize taste, and remain culturally informed—rewatching enables a slower, less demanding mode of engagement that prioritizes emotional reassurance over narrative surprise.

The paper situates the practice of rewatch as comfort viewing within the broader transformations of television as a technology and cultural form under conditions of streaming and algorithmic governance. While streaming platforms in some ways intensify anxiety through endless choice, optimization pressures, and accelerated consumption, they simultaneously facilitate rewatching through on-demand access, personalized recommendations, and interfaces that normalize repetition. This paradox highlights how contemporary television participates in both the production and the management of affective responses to crisis, positioning audiences not only as consumers as active agents navigating media abundance.

Moreover, the paper will show the first findings from exploratory qualitative research, based on preliminary interviews with young viewers. This initial empirical material will be used to identify recurring affective motivations, emotional vocabularies, and viewing routines associated with rewatching practices. Another aspect that will be examined is the sense of media-driven nostalgia, represented by TV shows from the past, now available again via streaming, which are often mentioned by interviewees.

TVS06 Entertainment Television: Practices & Politics

PP 0649 MEME(T)VISION New practices of circulation and commentary on television in the platform age The Eurovision Song Contest as a context for analysis

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Contemporary television is increasingly influenced by practices of circulation, transformation, and commentary that develop beyond the traditional contexts of broadcasting and streaming. In this scenario, social media assume a central role in the processes through which television content is remediated, re-signified, and reinserted into the space of public debate. This paper introduces the concept of memevision to describe these dynamics and to analyze the role of memes as a cultural modality through which television continues to produce meaning within a profoundly transformed media ecosystem.

The topic theoretically lies at the intersection of studies on media platformization (Van Dijck, Poell, Nieborg), studies on television and media events, with particular reference to research on the circulation of texts, paratexts, and media events (Dayan and Katz; Gray), and the literature on convergence and the participatory circulation of content (Jenkins). This framework is complemented by studies on memes as a communicative and cultural practice (Shifman; Milner), which allow us

to understand memes not only as textual objects but as situated social practices, grounded in processes of remixing, irony, and critical commentary.

Empirically, the paper examines the practices of meme production and circulation related to the Eurovision Song Contest 2025 on social media, with particular attention to X (formerly Twitter), analyzing the reworking of television content within a highly mediatized transnational event characterized by forms of real-time commentary. The analysis focuses on three main areas: memetic reactions to the performances and the show's most visually iconic moments, often constructed from expressions, gestures, or scenographic choices; memes relating to voting dynamics and the geopolitical dimensions of the event, including ironic or critical references to national alliances and political contexts; and the use of memes as a form of live commentary synchronized with the live broadcast, through official hashtags and practices of re-sharing and commentary, with particular attention to the processes of decontextualization and re-semanticization of the television text and the role of the platform's affordances in the visibility of content.

In this framework, memes function as devices for reworking the television event, multiplying its interpretive trajectories. The event thus emerges as an open text, continually rewritten through practices of commentary and reconfiguration that develop on social media.

This paper explores how these practices contribute to configuring the television event as an extended and distributed process, which unfolds beyond the temporality of live broadcast through practices of commentary, reworking, and rewriting. Starting from the observation of the practices of circulation and commentary related to the Eurovision Song Contest 2025, the paper offers a reflection on how contemporary television can be analyzed as a circulating object, whose meanings are progressively constructed and negotiated in the space of social media.

VIS01 Visual Journalism in (inter)national contexts

PP 0722 Everyday visual politics in Switzerland: A study of gendered representation in national and local media coverage

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Images reproduced in news media decisively shape how politicians are perceived, evaluated, and remembered by citizens (Graber, 1990; Kepplinger, 2010; Schill, 2012). Visual cues subtly evoke emotional responses in viewers and contribute to shaping perceptions of politicians' attributes, including competence, trustworthiness, and leadership (Grabe & Bucy, 2009; Lobinger & Brantner, 2015; Coleman & Wu, 2015).

However, visual portrayals and representational techniques in news media may reproduce gendered stereotypes. Accordingly, previous research has shown that female politicians are not only less visible than their male counterparts (Nyffeler, 2001; Schwaiger et al., 2021) but are also portrayed differently, through distinct visual framing, emotional expressiveness, or social distance (Bauer, 2015; Archer et al., 1983; Schmerl, 2004; Holtz-Bacha & Koch, 2008; Everitt et al., 2016). This combined dynamic of underrepresentation and misrepresentation shapes public perceptions of political authority (Carpinella & Johnson, 2016; Rohrbach et al., 2020; Ruprecht & Zumbrunn, 2025; Verge & Pastor, 2018), potentially undermining the electoral success of female politicians (Bauer & Carpinella, 2018).

While research has documented significant gender differences in both the quantity and quality of political representation in Anglo-American and European Union contexts (Bauer, 2015; Boussalis et al., 2021; Karl & Cormack, 2023; Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020; Verge & Pastor, 2018), systematic visual analyses of political representation in Switzerland remain limited. This gap is particularly noteworthy given Switzerland's unique political system, in which citizens participate in decision-making through initiatives of direct democracy (Rauchfleisch & Metag, 2016). As citizens rely on media coverage at both national and local levels to make informed political decisions, accurate and fair media representation is of central importance.

This project is among the first in Switzerland to examine how national and regional media outlets depict Swiss politicians and whether these visual practices reinforce or challenge gender-specific stereotypes. We present findings from a quantitative visual content analysis of images depicting Swiss politicians, published by leading national and regional online portals across the three main language regions between 2022 and 2025. We apply a multi-level coding scheme that captures formal, content-related, and person-centered visual features, including, for example, framing, perspective, social distance (Hall, 1966; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), and expressive cues. We further examine the ratio of head to body in image framing across genders (Archer et al., 1983), as a stronger emphasis on the face is often associated with perceived competence and positive evaluations, yet has been found to be less common in depictions of women (Holtz-Bacha & Koch, 2008; Schmerl, 2004). Our analysis systematically maps gendered visual patterns and their variation across contexts, situating them within Swiss political culture.

By focusing on everyday visual representations rather than exceptional moments, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of Switzerland's political visual culture and journalistic practices of depicting political figures. In doing so, the project aims to raise awareness within visual reporting practices and to support growing audience demands for more equitable and inclusive media depictions of political actors.

VIS01 Visual Journalism in (inter)national contexts

PP 0723 Russian visual journalism in exile: Seeking paths, connections and futures on shifting grounds

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With Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, nearly all independent Russian media relocated abroad due to censorship, repression, and technological constraints inside the country (Yablokov and Gatov, 2025). Frequent platform bans inside Russia forced exiled outlets to rely on diverse social media channels, requiring journalists to constantly adapt to new formats and tools (Wiik and Johansson, 2025). Like other exiled media worldwide, they now operate under constraints, serving audiences at home, abroad, and across diasporic communities (Dodds et al., 2024). Today, approximately 62 Russian exile outlets operate globally (JX Fund, 2025). Their work often blurs the boundaries between journalism and activism (Wiik and Johansson, 2025). They also occupy a politically liminal position: often labeled "foreign agents" in Russia, and viewed as "citizens of the aggressor state" in host countries or by Ukrainian actors (Rodina and Dovbysh, 2025: 10).

Drawing on seven semi-structured interviews with visual professionals working for seven Russian exile outlets (five photo-editors, an art director, and a data visualization specialist), this paper examines how visual journalism in exile responds to both universal and context-specific challenges. It asks: How do visual professionals work with selection, production and distribution of visual content under conditions of exile?

Economic constraints typical for visual journalism globally (e.g., Gynnild et al., 2017) become more severe in exile, with some outlets unable to subscribe to international photo-agencies. As one photo-editor noted, "there simply isn't a budget,

for example, for a proper image." Among the more specific challenges, interviewees described the paradox of covering events in Ukraine: while the intensity of visual coverage is "unmatched", access to images is often limited. International "war fatigue," combined with difficulties collaborating with both Russian and Ukrainian photographers, means exiled photo-editors sometimes no longer "choose from good photos, but rather publish at least anything."

Questions of authorship and transparency also arise. Due to safety concerns, outlets frequently cannot publish the names of photographers or non-professional image contributors, creating ethical dilemmas around attribution. Meanwhile, heavy reliance on social media for audience reach shapes both formats and priorities. Even small outlets employ social media specialists who advise visual professionals on platform-appropriate content, with video becoming a central priority for outlets originally focused on text and still photography. As one editor explained: "If we were a normal media outlet in a normal situation, the role of our social networks would be to drive traffic to our website… Instead, we try to make our social networks function as independent media in their own right." Finally, echoing broader research on Russian exile journalism (Rodina and Dovbysh, 2025; Yablokov and Gatov, 2025), interviewees highlighted the absence of a professional visual community: unlike general journalism, "there doesn't seem to be a similar community specifically for those who… focus on visual content."

Despite these challenges, Russian exile visual professionals remain in profession and believe that "people still maintain interest in certain kinds of high-quality images, created by skilled professionals", as expressed by one of the photo-editors in exile.

VIS01 Visual Journalism in (inter)national contexts

PP 0724 From golden age to precarity: Press cartooning in post-1989 Poland's media landscape

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Poland has a long and distinctive tradition of press cartooning, which for much of the twentieth century functioned as an integral part of journalistic commentary and public debate. Until the late 1980s, press cartoons occupied a stable and visible position within the Polish media system, with cartoonists enjoying high cultural recognition and relatively secure institutional support. The political and economic transformation after 1989 profoundly reshaped this landscape. While the abolition of censorship brought unprecedented artistic freedom, it coincided with the rapid commercialization, privatization, and later digitalization of the media sector, fundamentally altering the conditions of production and circulation of visual satire.

This paper examines the contemporary role of press cartoons and the professional situation of press cartoonists in Poland, focusing on the period after 1989. It is based on original qualitative research, including in-depth interviews with both well-established and younger Polish cartoonists, such as Andrzej Mleczko, Edward Lutczyn, and Jacek Frankowski. Their testimonies provide rare empirical insight into the lived experience of media transformation from the perspective of visual communicators who have traditionally operated at the intersection of art, journalism, and political commentary.

The analysis demonstrates that press cartooning in Poland has undergone a process of structural marginalization. The collapse of iconic satirical magazines and the gradual withdrawal of cartoons from mainstream newspapers have resulted in the disappearance of stable editorial positions and long-term contracts. Cartoonists have largely been pushed into freelance work, forced to diversify their income through illustration, graphic design, comics, or online activities. This shift has led to the growing precarization of the profession, characterized by economic instability, project-based employment, and limited visibility within contemporary news media.

At the same time, the paper highlights important changes in the communicative ecology of visual satire. As cartoons migrate to digital platforms and social media, their form increasingly overlaps with memes and other vernacular visual genres. While this transition offers new modes of circulation and audience engagement, it also contributes to authorial anonymity and the erosion of the cartoonist's recognizable public role. The study situates these developments within broader debates on creative labor, media transformation, and the declining institutional support for critical visual journalism.

By foregrounding the voices of cartoonists themselves, the paper argues that the precarization of press cartooning is not merely a professional issue but a symptom of wider changes in public communication. Despite their diminished institutional presence, press cartoons remain a powerful mode of visual commentary, capable of condensing complex political and social issues into accessible and emotionally resonant images. The paper concludes by reflecting on the implications of this transformation for the future of visual political communication and the democratic functions of satire in contemporary media systems.

VIS01 Visual Journalism in (inter)national contexts

PP 0725 Imagining internationalism: What photojournalists submit in "international photographer of the year" competitions

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This study examines the entrants, and their entries, to international photojournalist of the year categories in two annual major photojournalism competitions between 2022–2026. Broadly, it asks: who enters this category, and what do they choose to include to represent international interests?

Photojournalism varies across cultures, as does photojournalistic practice (Kim, 2025). There are numerous studies which examine how the world is represented in photojournalism, both from local photographers and from outsider photographers who travel in (see Gynnild et al., 2017; Mitra & Witherspoon, 2023). Photojournalism competitions recognize excellence in the field and serve as capital that shapes what is seen as valued in the industry (Solaroli, 2020). Studying these competitions can complement studies on published photojournalism, as it offers a different perspective from how the images are selected and valued. Much of the existing research on photojournalism competitions reveal useful insight based on the award-winning images (Greenwood & Smith, 2007), but this limits our knowledge to what the jury decides is worthy. By turning to the full population of entrants/entries instead, we can gain a different perspective of what photojournalists value, and think juries will value, in international visual coverage.

The first component of this study examines the entrants themselves, including demographic data such as age, gender, nationality and current country of residence. The second component examines the photos they submit in their portfolio entry, including topic and location.

Entry guidelines for two major photojournalism competitions open to photographers worldwide, Best of Photojournalism (BOP) and Pictures of the Year International (POY), permit the use of all entry information for research purposes, which makes this study possible (NPPA BoP, n.d.-a; POY, n.d.-a). Both competitions have portfolio-style categories relating to international photojournalism: BOP's "Photojournalist of the Year – International" and POY's "International Photographer of the Year" (BOP, n.d.-b; POY, n.d.-b)

An initial data request to both organizations resulted in a dataset containing 260 entries from 154 entrants in the 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 competitions, with an average of 44.2 photos per entry (BOP limits to 40 photos, POY limits to 50). The 2026 competition data will be added once available, and analysis will then be carried out.

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VIS01 Visual Journalism in (inter)national contexts

PP 0726 Shifting grounds in photojournalism: From index to reconstruction in AI-generated documentary practices

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Debates on AI-generated imagery in journalism have largely focused on its role in disinformation and visual manipulation (Farid 2022; Thompson et al. 2019; Hausken 2024). While digital technologies have already challenged photography's traditional indexicality (Barthes 1980), photography continues to be culturally and professionally associated with documentation and testimony (Keith et al 2006; Carlson 2009). In fields such as photojournalism, this documentary value has historically

been safeguarded through professional norms, verification practices, and institutional protocols (Schwartz 2003; Thomson 2019). The emergence of photorealistic AI-generated images further complicates this landscape by combining a strong aesthetic realism with the absence of a material link to an external referent.

From a constructivist perspective, the documentary status of images depends not only on their technical properties but also on the professional discourses, codes, and practices that frame them as evidence (Becker 1995; Harper 2023). While AI-generated images are often criticized for their potential to mislead audiences, they have also been used in journalistic and para-journalistic contexts to visualize events that cannot be photographed for material, legal, or ethical reasons. Despite these emerging practices, little empirical research has examined how media professionals themselves assess the informational and documentary legitimacy of AI-generated images.

This study asks: **under which conditions do news media professionals consider AI-generated images a legitimate means of documenting events?**

To address this question, we conducted a qualitative study based on 15 semi-structured interviews carried out between June and December 2024 with Italian photo editors and photojournalists who hold decision-making power over documentary imagery. A snowball sampling strategy was adopted, starting from members of the National Iconographic Editors Group (GRIN). Participants were selected based on two criteria: (1) responsibility for producing or selecting documentary images in news media, and (2) direct experience with AI-generated imagery. The sample included 8 photo editors and 7 photojournalists working for leading Italian media outlets. Interviews focused on three thematic areas: the impact of AI-generated images in news media, their relationship with documentary photography, and transformations in the visual content and stock agency industry. The data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis.

The findings indicate that interviewees do not perceive AI-generated imagery as a radical rupture in photojournalism, but rather as part of a longer process shaped by economic pressures, changing labor conditions, and the historical use of non-photographic visual forms (such as illustrations or reconstructions). While AI-generated images are not categorically rejected for documentary purposes, their legitimacy depends on specific conditions. These include the visualization of unphotographable events or verified verbal testimonies, explicit labeling as reconstructions, restrained aesthetic choices, and transparent, verified captions. The absence of shared ethical standards, the circulation of images on social media, and the reliance on stock archives emerge as major sources of concern.

The study concludes that AI-generated images cannot be dismissed outright as non-documentary. However, their potential integration into visual journalism depends on the development of clear ethical frameworks and professional protocols that recognize AI imagery as a distinct medium rather than a seamless extension of photography.

VIS02 Visual Stereotypes, Imaginaries and Identities

PP 0815 Negotiating female identity through collage creation in South Africa: A discourse-theoretical analysis and decolonial perspective

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The paper presents a discourse-theoretical analysis of how contemporary female artists in South Africa use collage to construct and negotiate female identity in decolonial contexts. Grounded in social constructionism and discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985), the study is further informed by feminist postcolonial, decolonial, and intersectional perspectives (including Oyěwùmí, Lugones, Tamale, Mohanty, Spivak, hooks, and Crenshaw). Female identity is approached not as a fixed or universal category, but as a contingent articulation shaped by intersecting cultural, political, religious, and colonial power relations.

Collage artwork is conceptualised as a medium that enables fragmentation, juxtaposition, and re-signification, offering insight into how hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations of female identity interact and are continually renegotiated within artistic practice. The paper approaches collage as a discursive practice through which female artists articulate and negotiate meanings associated with female identity within specific geographic, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which gender binaries are reproduced, questioned, or reconfigured through collage creation, especially in relation to the legacies of modernity and decolonial contexts.

Collage artworks are examined as analytically productive sites for tracing how visual and material configurations—including layering, juxtaposition, and symbolic associations—articulate competing discourses of female identity in local contexts. Rather than being treated as representative, these artistic practices are approached as sites through which female identity is actively negotiated and continuously reinterpreted through diverse expressive practices.

Challenging Eurocentric assumptions about gender, identity, and representation, the study is empirically grounded in discourse-theoretical analysis of selected collage artworks, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation conducted with contemporary female artists living in South Africa. The analysis demonstrates how the South African sociopolitical landscape—shaped by the intertwined legacies of colonialism, apartheid, indigenous epistemologies, decolonial perspectives and contemporary feminist struggles—produces specific discursive conditions in which competing discourses of femininity are articulated, sustaining female identity as a process that is never fully sutured into a coherent or unified identity.

VIS02 Visual Stereotypes, Imaginaries and Identities

PP 0816 Constructing countryside: Negotiating stereotypes of rural life in digital media

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The second decade of the 21st century has witnessed a turn towards rurality. Issues of provincial idyll, rural folklore and peasant origins are addressed not only by the media, but also by scholars in the social sciences attempting to redefine the paradigms of rurality, considering questions of identity, lifestyle and social mobility (Hoggard, 1990; Halfacree, 2006; Śpiewak, 2012). The countryside is increasingly a focus of media studies. Images disseminated in the media, perpetuating established myths and stereotypes, often contrast with the realities of the rapidly deagrarianized, multifunctional countryside. An influx of former city dwellers is creating new groups of residents and transforming social structures, provoking a shift from pre-existing mythologies and rural imaginaries in favour of alternative narratives. Rurality becomes a space of discourse, in which social media such as Instagram play an important part in (auto)representation and negotiating new roles of extra-urban areas and communities.

The research problem developed as part of a PhD dissertation involved identifying, categorising and analysing communication practices concerning the countryside and rurality in the digital sphere, with particular emphasis on social media. The study assumes that communication on social media results in transmitting established stereotypes into new media spaces, with a specific emphasis on the reproduction of the rural idyll myth. Accordingly, the research first identifies the most popular stereotypes and myths regarding the countryside in media and academic literature, and then traces their presence in the communication practices of private and institutional Instagram users. The study sought to capture diverse visual regimes of rural representation, as well as tensions between traditional narratives and portrayals of a countryside as a space of technological development and class aspirations.

The research is based on a corpus of 726 posts from 72 Polish-language Instagram accounts, analysed through qualitative content analysis with elements of netnography (Kozinets, 2020) and visual discourse analysis I (Rose, 2007). The accounts on rural themes selected during multi-stage research were divided into three communication perspectives, differentiated by broadcasting positions and assumed goals: individual (private users such as farmers or rural influencers), functional (oriented toward achieving specific goals, e.g. promotional or sales) and institutional (communication held by media outlets and public institutions).

Preliminary results indicate that “rural content” on Instagram has become a broad category: aestheticizing narratives from the cottagecore trend, fitting into stereotypes of slow life and living in harmony with nature, coexist with content that aspires to represent “authentic life” as well as commercial materials focused on promotion and sales, which draw on the myth of idyllic countryside for marketing and political purposes. An additional notable dimension is the grassroots relations of previously unheard groups, gaining new areas of digital visibility. One such group is young female farmers, who, in their communication, break stereotypes regarding women in the countryside. Although the study considers Poland, its results can serve as a basis for comparative analyses in the field of representations of the countryside in post-communist countries, as well as the mediatisation of rural areas in Western European countries whose societies did not experience post-war authoritarian regimes.

VIS02 Visual Stereotypes, Imaginaries and Identities

PP 0817 Ideological reversibility and visual homogenization in template-based visual communication

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In today’s platform-based communication landscape, the same graphic design template can be used to announce a protest, promote a corporate diversity initiative, or circulate institutional messaging, all without altering its visual structure. This paper takes this situation seriously and asks: “How can the same graphic form convincingly carry incompatible ideological messages without visual contradiction?”

Tools such as Canva promise accessibility and quick production, offering pre-designed layouts intended for wide reuse across campaigns, organizations, and causes. This paper introduces the concept of *ideological reversibility* to describe a design condition in which a single visual template is structured to accommodate different or even opposing ideological messages without requiring structural or even aesthetic modification.

This study examines how Canva templates are designed to remain semantically open in advance. Drawing on a semiotic analysis of highly promoted Canva templates designed for activist messages, the study examines iconographic abstraction that enables ideological and discursive substitution within a stable visual form. These design-level findings are contextualized through a comparative reading of selected Instagram posts that reuse the same templates across different activist and organizational contexts, illustrating how ideological reversibility operates in practice.

The findings suggest that ideological reversibility is not merely an accidental byproduct of generic design but a recurrent design condition that aligns with the logics of template economies, where scalability and reusability are prioritized. Building on Laclau's concept of the empty signifier and Barthes' analysis of myth, the study argues that commonly used activist symbols, such as megaphones or raised hands, function as empty signifiers within template-based design, retaining a generalized association with "voice" or "participation" while remaining ideologically nonspecific. This allows the same template to host feminist solidarity messages, corporate rhetoric, or institutional public communication without visual semantic resistance.

By conceptualizing Canva templates as visual infrastructures rather than neutral tools, this paper further argues that ideological reversibility can contribute to a form of pre-emptive depoliticization in visual communication, where graphic form absorbs ideological conflict rather than articulating difference. At the same time, ideological reversibility may contribute to visual homogenization, thereby limiting the capacity of the visual mode to convey meaning effectively altogether as communication becomes increasingly standardized.

VIS02 Visual Stereotypes, Imaginaries and Identities

PP 0818 Visual representation of science & scientists' Dutch media and science communication

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'Portrayed behind a bookshelf, wearing a lab coat or experimenting with microscopes and pipets'; the visual representation of science and scientists seems to be rather unbalanced and not representative for the diversity of the Dutch research landscape and the scientist operating within it.

Images of science and scientist play an important role in the dissemination and communication of science to a wide audience (Davies & Horst, 2016; Cho et al., 2009). Visual images can effectively bridge the gap between complex scientific ideas and public understanding (Monoyioset al.2024; Butdisuwan et al. 2024). However, the use of images for science communication is not neutral (Delicado, Rowland, 2021). A study by Delicado and Rowland on the visual representation of science during the Covid-19 Pandemic indicates a disbalance in representation with excessive attention to people in white coats and goggles, laboratory benches or microscopes.

Various studies have indicated a disbalance between men & women in the representation of science in scientific magazines (Loverock & Hart, 2018) or in media, (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2019). Furthermore, there is an underrepresentation of scientists from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Mitchell & McKinnon, 2019).Despite the growing attention to diversity at Dutch Universities, the proportion of female researchers in the Netherlands is low, compared to other European countries (European Commission, 2019) and, according to the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP 2025), women experts are dramatically underrepresented in media.

In the Science (Un)seen project, researchers from Fontys University of Applied Sciences and the Dutch Centre of Expertise Science and Society (NEWS) are unravelling the representation of science and scientist in the Netherlands. By organisaing a focus group session with 25 experts of science communication we identified needs and concerns concerning the visual representation of science and scientist. The attendees mention a severe lack of cultural diversity and an overrepresentation of specific scientific disciplines.

In the second stage of the project, we are analysing a sample of 300 images (between 2020–2024) of online news platforms of Dutch media Outlets (100 images), Dutch Universities and Universities of Applied Science (100 images) and online Dutch science platforms (100 images) focusing on the diversity in research fields & disciplines, gender and cultural diversity and research methods..

The study will be completed in March; at this stage the preliminary insights can not be shared.

VIS02 Visual Stereotypes, Imaginaries and Identities

PP 0819 Visualising health: sexual and reproductive health communication on social media

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Social media platforms have become everyday environments where individuals not only search for health-related information but also share personal experiences. At the same time, these platforms function as important communication channels for health professionals, influencers, and marketers promoting health products and services. While health communication on social media has attracted scholarly attention, research that foregrounds the visual dimension and centres women's perspectives remains limited. This paper addresses this gap by examining visual communication of sexual and reproductive health, with a particular focus on women's health, as it appears across mainstream social media platforms.

The study sets out to analyse *the explanatory and affective work that visuals perform in communicating sexual and reproductive health topics*. It draws on a dataset gathered in four European countries, namely Austria, Estonia, Finland, and the UK, between 2023 and 2025. The data consist of social media content by diverse creators, such as health professionals, health organisations, companies, as well as lifestyle and wellness influencers, whose messaging reinforces both evidence-based and alternative health approaches. These visual data were gathered through social media user autoethnographies and social media user and content creator interviews, focusing on users' interpretations and perceptions of online health content and creators' visual strategies and motivations. The autoethnographic descriptions and interview data provide contextual grounding for the visual analysis done in the study. This multi-source approach enables an exploration of the various perspectives that shape the visuality of contemporary sexual health discourses online.

Using qualitative visual analysis that takes into account the multimodality of the examined content, the study identifies recurring visual elements and cues in the image and video content (e.g., metaphoric visualisations of the sexual organs, cultural performances in specific situations, such as the reading of a pregnancy test result and medical props, such as the ultrasound machine) and examines how these contribute to making sexual and reproductive health issues in/visible, understandable and emotionally resonant. While health content on social media faces universal challenges related to platform governance and cultural taboos, different types of creators (health professionals, health organisations, holistic and alternative health creators, influencer-type creators, companies) use different multimodal strategies to navigate between attention-grabbing, persuasiveness, and making a particular argument. By exploring the framings of women's sexual and reproductive health in the context of social media creator and user perceptions, we highlight tensions between evidence-based health argumentation and ideological alignment. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate the potential of visual communication to support education and empowerment around women's health while also pointing to risks of misguidance and unnecessary medicalisation.

VIS03 Gendered Bodies in Visual Social Media

PP 0922 "Far-right daddies": Cross-platform vernacular and the practice of embarrassment

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On social media, political deliberation is often enacted through culturally recognisable forms of humour, visuals and sound rather than through formal institutions, organisations or elite discourse. Social media enables various forms of vernacular creativity, such as humorous interpretations of political events, expecting and rewarding it, offering ways to playfully engage with politics (Hartley, 2013). These types of humorous interpretations are often satirical in nature, exposing historical reality to ridicule (Billig, 2005). This type of playful political deliberation is adapted to the norms, affordances, and genres of particular platforms, with each platform having its own unique combination of styles, grammars and logics (Gibbs et al., 2015; Keller, 2019). The platform's vernacular is also shaped by the mediated practices and communicative habits of users. Elite users, such as content creators, are on multiple platforms, producing content that is shareable across platforms. This study examines how social media content creators draw on platform vernacular, popular culture and humour to ridicule political actors on the political right and the far-right in England and America. The study uses multimodal thematic analysis to analyse videos from a content creator on Instagram and TikTok. The findings reveal that, through curated image selections, creative uses of sound and audio memes, and renders of visual filters and effects, the audiovisual aesthetics of both platforms are used to redefine platform vernacular as something that occurs across platforms rather than on a single one. The findings also reveal that images are used to delegitimise and ridicule political actors, positioning them as being unworthy of respect or reasoned engagement. The images also ridicule the political actors by embodying them and making them appear mechanical, excessive and incompetent. The findings highlight how social media remains the 'ground' where political life can be playfully corrected through ridicule and embarrassment and the use of cross-platform vernacular creating connections in the shifting grounds of platformised labour.

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VIS03 Gendered Bodies in Visual Social Media

PP 0923 Do short videos mitigate gender bias in visual political representation? A face-ism analysis of six Swiss parties

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Research has consistently documented gendered patterns in the visual depiction of political figures, with facial prominence representing a central dimension. The face-ism index measures the ratio between the length of the face and the total visible body in a photograph (Archer et al., 1983). Higher facial prominence has been associated with perceived competence and traits such as intelligence and assertiveness (Archer et al., 1983; Schwarz & Kurz, 1989). Across both media coverage and official political imagery, male politicians are more frequently depicted with facial emphasis, while female politicians are shown with greater bodily emphasis (Copeland, 1989; Holtz-Bacha & Koch, 2008; Peng, 2018; Kinnebrock & Knieper, 2014; Schmerl, 2004; Konrath & Schwarz, 2007), reinforcing stereotypical representations and limiting perceptions of competence. While this body of research has primarily focused on static images in traditional media, the increasing centrality of social media platforms as arenas for political visibility (Highfield, 2016; Van Aelst et al., 2017) calls for exploring whether facial prominence, a well-established analytical indicator of gendered representation, can be applied to shifting visual formats. In particular, the short video format popularized by visual platforms such as TikTok has introduced new compositional norms based on vertical framing (Ryan, 2018). These portrayal standards may challenge or reconfigure the gendered visual conventions historically observed in still images.

Focusing on short videos by six Swiss parties during the 2023 federal election year that were published on TikTok and Instagram, this study proposes a methodological adaptation of face-ism for video analysis. We thereby examine how the facial prominence of political figures varies across scenes and individual shots, addressing challenges posed by movement and temporal segmentation that were absent in the original method (Archer et al., 1983). To ensure accuracy, measurements combine manual coding with computational approaches using PySceneDetect and Amazon Rekognition (AWS) (Ulloah et al., 2024), enabling a robust assessment of facial prominence in video content.

Our results indicate that gender alone does not significantly predict facial prominence ($F(1, 251) = 0.609$, $p = 0.436$). In contrast, party affiliation exerts a strong effect ($F(5, 251) = 25.446$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.336$). While the mean difference between women and men is smaller than historically documented, overall face-ism values are lower than those reported in classic studies that examined still images (Archer et al., 1983; Konrath & Schwarz, 2007; Schmerl et al., 2004). On the one hand, our preliminary findings suggest that vertical short videos may mitigate gender disparities through compositional norms that center the subject and foster visual intimacy (Ryan, 2018). On the other hand, the emphasis on bodily visibility and movement appears to reduce facial prominence overall, which raises the important question of how the video format shapes the evaluation of competence of political figures. By analyzing facial prominence across political short videos, this study contributes to ongoing debates on shifting visual norms in political communication and explores how evolving platform-specific practices perpetuate persistent gendered patterns or contribute to more balanced depictions of male and female politicians.

VIS03 Gendered Bodies in Visual Social Media

PP 0924 Choreographic rites: From Chantal Akerman's Toute une nuit (1982) to Ana Esteve Reig's Fancams (2022) and TikTok practices

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TikTok dance practices can be understood as choreographic rites of everyday life in our mediated societies. By placing these practices in dialogue with Chantal Akerman's choreographic film *Toute une nuit* (1982), and Ana Esteve Reig's essayistic video installation *Fancams* (2022), based on platform dances, the paper traces a trajectory through these embodied practices across cinema, audiovisual art, and social media platforms. In both Akerman's and Ana Esteve Reig's work, choreography, body language and gestures, as well as repetition and temporal duration, play a fundamental role. A qualitative and comparative analysis of these works allows us to reflect on how the ritual of dance changes when we move from the intimate movements of lovers who meet and part on a summer night in Brussels in Akerman's film to the young people who meet in the Azca area of Madrid, who use dance as a social gesture, intended for posting on their social networks to be viewed by those on the other side of the screen.

This analysis also reflects on the ways in which these dances are shown, from the choreographic editing of Akerman's film, designed for an audience standing in front of a large horizontal screen, to the slow motion of Ana Esteve Reig's work, which focuses on the gestures used by young people in dance videos, intended to be viewed with a certain immediacy in a vertical format that facilitates scrolling on a Smartphone screen. At the same time, Ana Esteve Reig's audiovisual essay is conceived as a video art installation on two simultaneous screens that invites an immersive experience in these mediated dances, as well as prompting reflection on the new ways of presenting ourselves in front of the camera, where young people learn new

choreographies and create diverse communities, both in the physical and virtual worlds, with which to share, imitate and reiterate their gestures, generating a space for self-expression, while at the same time influenced by the culture of virality, data and 'likes', where the private becomes public. I will address these movements and changes with an interdisciplinary approach based on texts from Film and Media Studies (Couldry, 2004; Deuze, 2016; Guardiola, 2018; Russell, 1999; Vannini, 2023; Zafra, 2010, 2013), Anthropology (Certeau et al., 2007; Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1982), Spectatoriality and Gender Studies (Marks, 2000, 2024; Sobchack, 1992, 2004).

VIS04 AI, Automation, and Visual Communication

PP 1030 Dehumanised and fleshy: The grotesque bodies in AI slop

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'AI Slop' refers to low-quality content generated by AI systems and distributed across the internet, often for engagement, attention, and monetisation. The term captures a sense of degradation: Content that's technically coherent but aesthetically excessive, often vulgar, and demanding of attention. This article examines a particularly disturbing category of AI-generated imagery where bodily transformation and distortion become entertainment. AI-generated imagery participates in a broader cultural logic where bodies are seen as endlessly modifiable, improvable, and transformable. But where cosmetic image culture promises improvement, grotesque 'AI slop' displays a darker side of body culture: The body as a site of corruption and loss of control. Imagine a pile of heads, recognisable as human-like, detached from a body, but still 'alive', widely grinning with protruding teeth. Or the display of a large human body made of hamburgers running on a treadmill, oozing cheese on the treadmill.

While debates around AI-generated content often focus on questions of authenticity and labour displacement, I argue that visual studies' most urgent concern lies in how these images mobilise cultural reflections of dehumanisation and the grotesqueness of bodies, repackaging them as absurdist entertainment. Drawing on Bakhtin's grotesque body (, I examine how AI slop appropriates the aesthetics of bodily transgression, boundary violations, excessive materiality, bodies in transformation, while stripping away carnival's regenerative politics. Through Kristeva's (2024) concept of abjection, I analyse the visceral disgust these images produce: bodies that violate categories, disturbing boundaries between human and non-human, subject and object. Building on Linda Williams' (1991) notion of body genres, I demonstrate how AI slop operates through body horror's logic – spectacles of bodily violation that produce involuntary physical responses in viewers, collapsing the distance between image and embodied spectator. Finally, deploying Mbembe's (2019) framework of necropolitics, I reveal how these images enact a form of visual violence wherein certain bodies are made available for the grotesque, reduced to spectacles of partial death, degraded into meat, objects, or void. This imagery is symptomatic, not as intentional expressions of coherent ideas but rather cultural symptoms that reveal underlying anxieties, tensions, and contradictions. In this framework, these images are like dreams: they do not have authors with clear intentions, but they condense and displace cultural ideas in ways that reveal what's repressed.

The study employs a critical-aesthetic approach to AI slop on TikTok and Instagram, combining visual analysis with platform ethnography to understand how grotesque bodies circulate as popular entertainment. I select videos based on engagement metrics (views, likes, shares) to capture content that successfully generates platform visibility. Through systematic mapping, I categorise the types of AI slop I encounter. This corpus reveals patterns in which bodies become available for grotesque transformation and how platform algorithms amplify particular grotesque expressions. The original contribution of this paper lies in revealing how AI slop's grotesque aesthetics are not merely technological artefacts but showcase cultural and political fears about how bodies are made available for degradation and spectacle.

VIS04 AI, Automation, and Visual Communication

PP 1031 When photographs look fake and AI images feel real: How audiences perceive and assess AI-generated images in journalistic contexts

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The rapid diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (genAI) has introduced new visual forms into journalistic environments, challenging long-established assumptions about photographic realism, authenticity, and visual truth. Images have historically functioned as central evidentiary devices in news media, anchoring journalistic narratives to the perceived reality of events. As genAI imagery increasingly appears in news contexts, sometimes with limited transparency, questions arise about how audiences interpret such images, how they assess credibility, and how visual cultures of journalism are being reshaped (Hausken, 2024).

This paper examines how young adults perceive, interpret, and assess genAI images in journalistic contexts, with particular attention to the interplay between visual cues, material practices, and affective responses. Situated within media and visual culture studies, the paper approaches images as culturally embedded, technologically mediated, and affectively charged

objects that shape how audiences imagine and understand reality (Bengtsson Lundin, 2021; Nilsson, 2020). It explores how audiences navigate the blurred boundaries between photographic and genAI images, and how this navigation shapes their understanding of visual authenticity and trust in news media.

Empirically, the paper draws on a qualitative, two-session mixed-methods study combining eye-tracking data with in-depth, semi-structured interviews. In the first session, participants were asked to engage with online news articles in which original photographs had been replaced with genAI images, followed by a second session in which they assessed standalone images as either photographs or genAI visuals. Following each session, participants were interviewed about their experience. This methodological design allows for an analysis of both articulated interpretive strategies and embodied viewing practices, offering insight into how visual attention, intuition, and contextual framing interact in real time.

Preliminary findings suggest that participants rely on a combination of learned visual heuristics and affective "gut feelings" when assessing image authenticity. Attention is frequently directed towards faces, skin textures, hands, and backgrounds, areas perceived as prone to AI-related irregularities, yet confidence in these strategies is uneven among participants. Contextual elements such as accompanying news texts, captions, and the perceived credibility of news outlets play a significant role, sometimes reinforcing trust and at other times obscuring critical scrutiny. Notably, participants demonstrated lower accuracy and confidence when evaluating images outside a journalistic context, underscoring the importance of journalistic framing in visual interpretation.

The study contributes to ongoing discussions within visual cultures by highlighting how material practices of image production intersect with audience perception, emotion, and ethical reflection. It underscores the need to understand genAI imagery not only as a technological development, but as a cultural and perceptual phenomenon with implications for visual literacy, journalistic ethics, and the future norms of visual truth in news media.

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VIS04 AI, Automation, and Visual Communication

PP 1032 Understanding the recipient: Comparison of GenAI-generated and human-created images in marketing communication

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Images are an inherent component of marketing communication. Generative AI allows for creating unprecedented amounts of visual content in previously unattainable short amount of time. As a consequence, the academic community begins to research user engagement for both GenAI-generated and human-created images. As of today, they came to varied conclusions: online ads which involve GenAi-generated images may outperform human-produced ads in terms of online response (Hartmann, Exner et al. 2024, Heitmann 2024) At the same time, researchers already discovered that reception of artistic images is more favourable (on semantic and emotional levels) when images are produced by humans (Hond, Curran 2019; Sun, Yang et al., 2022).

It is imperative to understand why recipients click on different ads and what was their response to marketing imagery specifically. This can be achieved by conducting research on the recipients' response to images, taking into account their evaluation of technical, semantic and emotional aspects of an image (Norman 2002).

The purpose of the study is to perform a focus group interview involving images related to the theme of 'Self-care' (this one being one of the fastest-growing industries around the world at the moment). Respondents at the age between 18 and 45 years old (the largest group that spends disposable income on self care) (McKinsey, 2024) come from varied backgrounds and education levels.

Research questions are as follows: Are recipients able to distinguish GenAI-generated images from human-created marketing images? If so, how do they recognise them? What is the recipients' response to both groups of images on the technical level (image quality and style), semantic level (connotations and meanings) and emotional level (emotions that are provoked)?

Anticipated outcomes for this study include finding a preference for human-created images on semantic and emotional levels, similarly to previous findings about recipients' response to artistic images. Similarities found in all GenAI-generated which occur due to the technological framework used to create them, as well as excessive symmetry and perfection found in the images, appears to create emotional distance in recipients. This should be significant for the creators of marketing communication who aim at having a real impact on their audience.

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VIS04 AI, Automation, and Visual Communication

PP 1033 Searching for peace: An image-type analysis of Google Images results

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Destruction, soldiers, suffering: conflict and war consistently dominate news coverage and social media feeds, reinforcing a visual culture of violence and spectacle. Such imagery circulates widely and shapes collective understandings of global instability. In contrast, visual representations of peace are either absent or confined to a narrow repertoire of generic motifs, divorced from political complexity or historical contexts. This visual asymmetry is not happening by accident: it reflects and reinforces broader epistemic hierarchies about what is deemed representable, newsworthy, or emotionally resonant and raises critical questions about whose futures are imagined and made visible (Fast et al., 2024). As digital infrastructures like Google Images increasingly act as default gateways to knowledge, their algorithmic curation of images plays a decisive role in structuring public meaning-making. This raises urgent questions about how peace is imagined, depoliticized, or rendered invisible within platform-driven visual economies. Foregrounding concerns about understanding media ecosystems, we examine the Google Images search engine as an actor that shapes how people access and connect with representations of peace and conflict. Their influence on collective imaginaries is therefore both significant and understudied.

To address this gap, our study explores how online visual repertoires of peace are constructed through an analysis of Google Images results for 20 peace-related keywords. For each keyword, 300 images were analyzed using an image-type analysis that integrates semi-automated clustering (ViT-B/16) with iterative rounds of open sorting and qualitative interpretation.

Our findings reveal three central patterns that provide interesting entry points for further analysis. First, most image types omit human presence entirely, thereby aligning with the concept of “negative peace”, in which the absence of humans symbolizes peace. Second, symbolic imagery, such as doves, handshakes, flags, and other historically entrenched icons, dominates the online repertoire. As a result, although widely circulated, such symbols offer limited conceptual depth and display striking aesthetic uniformity. Nevertheless, such generic images remain influential by capturing attention, reinforcing ideological frames, and enabling emotional engagement (Kennedy et al, 2025). Third, images featuring human actors display a clear gender bias: men are predominantly shown in positions of power (e.g., signing agreements or speaking at political events), while women more often appear as aid recipients or community caretakers. Even in peacekeeping imagery, where institutions such as the UN strive for gender-balanced representation, male soldiers are shown in groups in militarized settings, whereas female soldiers typically appear isolated in close-ups and engaged in community-oriented tasks.

By revealing how digital search infrastructures privilege reductive and biased visual representations and gender tropes, this research highlights the shifting grounds that shape public understandings of peace and conflict. In doing so, it informs broader debates about the role of (visual) communication scholarship in cultivating more nuanced, inclusive, and future-oriented representations of complex global challenges. The study also contributes to ongoing debates about the political implications of visual communication technologies. It reaffirms the role of media scholarship in interrogating the visual architecture of geopolitical discourse and alternative futures.

VIS05 Contested Public Visibilities

PP 1134 Regimes of visibility: Media infrastructures in the Age of hybrid warfare

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In war, Antoine Bousquet reminds us, "visibility equals death" (Bousquet 2018). Infrastructures, Susan Leigh Star famously noted, are "visible until breakdown" (Star 1999). Media infrastructures has been att the centre of the latest development in what has been called a hybrid war in the Baltic Sea region. This paper address how the role of media infrastructures in hybrid warfare can be understood through the lens of what I call regimes of visibility. In September 2022 the NordStream 2 pipeline was the target of sabotage, resulting in a massive gas leak and speculations over suspected perpetrators. This can be considered a first step of a developing hybrid war in the Baltic Sea region in wake of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine. These acts of sabotage intensified and widened in scope, and by 2024 media infrastructures such as undersea communication cables, but also navigational media such as radar, AIS (Automated Identification System) and GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) were targeted. To protect, as well as target, these infrastructures, a range of efforts to move them in and out of visibility were employed. The paper demonstrates, by means of analyzing data and visuals presented by so-called OSINT (OpenSource Intelligence) specialists, how hybrid warfare involves various acts of making the invisible visible, resulting in an oscillation between regimes of visibility.

The paper considers two interlinked acts of hybrid warfare. First, a series of cable breaks in the Gulf of Finland and east of the Swedish island Gotland has occurred since 2024. The cables and their routes are themselves the result of "negotiations of visibility" (Starosielski 2012), with their exact location hidden from direct view but still marked on cable maps of the area (i.e. submarincablemap.com). The cable breaks were investigated by Finnish and Swedish authorities, accusing false flag Russian tankers of purposefully dragging anchors across known cable routes. OSINT specialists has used open source AIS data in order to verify these accusations. The data demonstrated unusual behaviour of the ships, i.e. unmotivated deviations from course or slowing down (as a result of dragging the anchor across the seabed). Live and recorded AIS data is visualized by tools such as marinetraffic.com and OSINT specialists have further visualized these otherwise invisible acts of sabotage far out on the sea.

Second, AIS together with other navigational systems such as GNSS and radar have themselves been targets of hybrid warfare. Since late 2023 the so-called "Baltic Jammer" has interfered with the digital signals of these systems, seriously affecting the accuracy and disrupted air as well as marine traffic. Again, OSINT specialists have used open source data in order to localize and identify the "jammer", detecting the origins of the interfering signal but also visualizing the extent of the jamming operation.

Together, the acts of sabotaging media infrastructures and the forensic work invested in detecting and confirming them represents an oscillation between regimes of visibility, keeping infrastructures protected and vulnerable in the age if hybrid warfare.

VIS05 Contested Public Visibilities

PP 1135 From screens to streets: Physical situated data visualization as a tool for civic engagement and communication in public spaces

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We live in a visually saturated information society (Webster, 2014; Kostelnick & Hasset, 2022) where our perception is increasingly shaped by data visualizations and infographics. However, these are typically confined to interaction with digital screens. (Coenen & Moere, 2021; Drucker & Gumpert, 2012) This paper investigates the informational and communicative potential of situated data visualizations embedded directly into the physical public space – examining how they influence public discussion (Claes & Vande Moere, 2013; Coenen & Moere, 2021), foster civic engagement (Camociny & Dominoni, 2022; Gill et al., 2023) and allow passers-by to reflect on complex phenomena.

The research is based on two distinct case studies conducted in Brno, Czechia. The first intervention (September 2024) took place on Vachova Street, which was transformed into a temporary pedestrian zone. Here, the author used analogue media (chalk crayons) to visualize survey data on urban life directly onto the pavement. The second case study (December 2024 – March 2025) involved a large-scale printed dashboard placed in a passageway near Kino Art, visualizing the cinema's annual data using the popular Spotify Wrapped format (Annabell & Rasmussen, 2024; Keenan, 2024).

Methodologically, both studies relied on a qualitative analysis of semi-structured in-depth interviews with passersby and observation. The research focused on how the public perceives, interacts with, and understands these complex data visualizations in a non-traditional form and environment.

The findings highlight that visual appeal (such as colours and simple graphics) often acts as the critical primary trigger for engagement. Respondents indicated that the aesthetics forced them to stop, and subsequently immerse themselves in

the data. In the case of the cinema intervention, elements reminiscent of popular digital formats (e.g., wrapped) made the data instantly recognisable and comparable, significantly facilitating comprehension and engagement. (Bohuslavová, 2025)

Furthermore, the analysis reveals that contextual embedding is crucial. Participants noted that the physical proximity to the subject matter transformed abstract statistics into relevant, personal narratives. The participants also emphasised a sense of self-identification and familiarity with either the format or the data as a key element of their interest in the intervention.

Finally, the research synthesises these findings into practical design implications. It argues that effective public data communication requires a balance of familiarity and unexpectedness in its elements – using recognisable formats in unexpected physical settings and forms. Based on the author's creative practice, the research also proposes a strategic communication workflow. It emphasises that the communication impact of a visualization in public space is determined in the preparatory phase by defining the purpose through essential questions, such as: *What is the purpose of this visualization and who is it targeted at? How is the perception of visual elements by passers-by influenced by thoughtful contextual placement?*

In conclusion, this research argues that situated data visualizations function as powerful communication tools. By combining engaging visual aesthetics and data-based elements with site-specific relevance, they successfully disrupt routine urban experiences and offer a new, accessible space for collective sense-making and reflection on complex data and phenomena that would otherwise remain hidden.

VIS05 Contested Public Visibilities

PP 1136 Attacking the canon to save the planet: Visual culture and climate activism in art museums and monuments

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Since 2022, iconic art museums and monuments have become key sites for climate protests carried out by civil disobedience collectives. Through disruptive actions targeting canonical artworks—such as Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Velázquez's Venus at her Mirror, Goya's Majas, Munch's The Scream and Botticelli's Primavera—as well as monuments including Stonehenge, the Brandenburg Gate and the Spanish Congress of Deputies, these groups have systematically broken into the international media agenda.

Primarily funded by the Climate Emergency Fund, activist collectives have developed a communication strategy centred on the production of highly impactful images aimed at denouncing governmental inaction in the face of the climate emergency. These interventions are not limited to provocation, but articulate a coherent visual storytelling which, beyond local differences, reveals shared references to art history and to previous activist movements such as the suffragettes or Femen. In this way, cultural heritage functions as a symbolic surface from which the meaning of the ecosocial crisis is contested.

This paper analyses the images resulting from these actions carried out between 2022 and 2025, to identify and describe the visual universe, recurring symbols, and aesthetic patterns that structure this phenomenon. Drawing on a corpus of images produced by groups such as Futuro Vegetal, Just Stop Oil, Ultima Generazione, Letzte Generation and Riposte Alimentaire, the study explores how these interventions configure an aesthetic of disruption based on the symbolic reappropriation of the artistic canon. These practices generate a visual storytelling that combines references to art history with earlier activist traditions—from the suffragettes to Femen—thereby producing a recognisable iconography circulating globally.

The findings reveal not only ideological, strategic and economic connections among these groups, but also strong aesthetic and narrative affinities. The repeated use of ritualised elements—such as red liquids (tomato soup or washable paint), specific bodily poses, the centrality of the female body and the performative staging of protest—points to the existence of a shared and carefully designed iconography. Far from isolated events, these practices constitute a transnational aesthetic that leverages the symbolic authority of the artistic canon to generate moral and emotional friction.

Finally, in contrast to their frequent media characterisation as acts of vandalism, this study argues that these actions should be understood as strategic visual devices aimed at activating public consciousness and reinscribing the art museum as a space of political antagonism. In this sense, climate protests targeting artistic heritage reveal a sophisticated understanding of contemporary visual culture and the regimes of visibility that structure public debate on the climate crisis.

VIS05 Contested Public Visibilities

PP 1137 Suffering in the eye of an algorithmic beholder: Auditing aesthetic bias in the visual representation of Holocaust victims on Google

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Many studies (e.g., Kay et al., 2015; Otterbacher et al., 2017) indicate the risk of search engine algorithms reiterating or amplifying gender bias, particularly regarding the representation of vulnerable groups (e.g., women of colour and from

countries outside of the Global North; e.g., Noble, 2018; Urman & Makhortykh, 2024). However, despite the growing number of areas in which gender bias is discussed in the context of web search, for instance, politics (Pradel, 2021) or innovation (Makhortykh et al., 2021), its role in some societally relevant areas remains understudied. One of such areas is heritage, particularly heritage dealing with mass atrocities such as the Holocaust, which until now is often contested and frequently instrumentalized for the needs of today's politics.

To address these questions, we conduct an algorithm audit of how Google, one of the world's most commonly used search engines, visually represents victims of the Holocaust and whether such representation is prone to gender bias. We are interested in gender bias in image search, both due to the strong affective potential that visual images have, and much research on the topic so far has focused on image search. Specifically, we manually collected the top 50 image search results from 50 locations worldwide (with most of the locations in Europe, where the Holocaust took place). We used a VPN to simulate local IP addresses for all the locations and also translated the gender-neutral query - i.e., "Holocaust victims" - into the official languages of the country corresponding to each location.

After collecting the data, we used computer vision to automatically identify the number of human beings present on each image appearing in search results and their sex (we recognize that sex is a simplified proxy for a complex gender construct, but automated identification of different forms of gender remains a challenging task). For this aim, we used Amazon Rekognition API, as earlier studies (e.g., Ulloa et al., 2024) demonstrated that its performance for analysing human-related features (including the number of individuals and their age) is on par with human-made assessments. To confirm it, we conducted a sanity test using a small subset of images, which were analyzed by the authors and then compared to the outcomes of the Rekognition API.

For the analysis, we tested a set of hypotheses, which are informed by research on Holocaust heritage, particularly the memorialization of victims. The first hypothesis is that image search results will contain more images of women than of men due to Holocaust-related memorial practices in many European countries focusing on images of more vulnerable victims, such as women and children. The second hypothesis is that the number of images with humans will be higher for countries from which more Holocaust victims originated and where we find more Holocaust memorial sites. The third hypothesis is that the present-day gender equality score will influence the distribution of female and male victims depicted in image search results. To test these hypotheses, we employed correlation analysis and generalized linear mixed-effects models.

AEM01 Who Are We (Not)? Affective Potentials of Mediated Identity Work and Politics

PP 0655 "Woke" as an affective signifier in the Nordic public debates

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The paper delivers a comparative analysis of how the signifier "woke" is imported from the US and circulated in the Nordic press. Inspired by Ernesto Laclau's theory on populism, "woke" is understood here as a floating signifier that various political groups use in their self-identifications and differentiations with other groups.

The paper is part of the research project Polarization, Affect, Identity: Nordic populism and the media landscape (Pol-Aid) funded by the Norwegian research council. The project has formerly conducted country specific case analyses of woke in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark.

This study focuses on the original comparative content analysis of the woke discourses of leading daily and tabloid in four above-mentioned countries and explores when the debates over woke entered the mainstream public sphere, who have dominated these debates and what kind of meanings have been linked to woke. Through the analysis we compare the affective identifications and mobilizations woke as a signifier has been connected in different Nordic countries.

While the Nordic countries form in global comparison rather distinct country family on system and institutional level, their political cultures and histories differ significantly. Therefore, the comparison of the public debates over "woke" in these countries reveal remarkable differences in their populist mobilizations and identifications and in the connections of these affective processes to transnational narratives recycled especially by the Anglo-American far right and their "enemies". In this, our analysis also contributes to the increasingly discussed theory of affective polarization in liberal multi-party democracies.

Our preliminary analysis of the public use of "woke" indicates that the term has been discussed much more in Sweden than in three other countries and its use as an affective signifier in far-right's anti-woke campaigns has largely been adopted in all four countries. However, the use and framing of the term depends heavily on the status and success of the populist radical right actors in their party fields and varies according to contextual issues debated on the public spheres of the four studied countries.

AEM01 Who Are We (Not)? Affective Potentials of Mediated Identity Work and Politics

PP 0656 Between trans joy and trans-antagonism: Affective contestations around Germany's self-determination act on TikTok

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In November 2024, Germany passed the Self-Determination Act (*Selbstbestimmungsgesetz*, SBGG), replacing the restrictive "Transsexuals Act" and enabling name and gender marker changes through self-declaration for trans, intersex, and non-binary people. Against the backdrop of shifting social and political grounds, the legislative process triggered intense and highly emotional debates across competing publics, revealing deep-seated tensions around gender and contested claims over vulnerability. Digital platforms, as "infrastructures of feeling" (Authors, 2026), play a central role in shaping the ways emotions are performed, claimed, and publicly felt. TikTok in particular produces specific temporalities, intensities, relationalities, and forms of (dis)embodiment, privileging its algorithmically curated "ForYouPage," memetic templates, and expressive bodies as central modes of communication (Kaye et al., 2022).

This paper examines the affective and discursive negotiation of the SBGG on TikTok, asking: (1) How are emotions embodied and performed through different affective registers, and how are these shaped by TikTok's affordances? (2) Which emotions gain visibility and relevance, and how are they (de)legitimized across communities? The analysis draws on a dataset of 1,509 publicly accessible videos collected via TikTok's Research API using the hashtags #Selbstbestimmungsgesetz and #SBGG, covering the period from the release of the draft bill in May 2023 to one year after the law's implementation in November 2025. We use a mixed-methods design that combines hashtag co-occurrence analysis to map broader affective and discursive themes, tensions, and alliances with qualitative multimodal analysis of a sample of 190 videos guided by the concept of "affective registers" (Töpper, 2020) to examine how emotions are embodied and performed across different communities.

Preliminary results indicate the emergence of three distinct *affective communities*. Trans creators and activists mobilize joy, relief, pride, and solidarity to claim visibility and create a sense of belonging, while using platform affordances to share educational content, political commentary, and guidance on bureaucratic procedures. Self-ascribed radical feminists foreground fear and anger, weaponizing narratives of protecting cis women and children, positioning them as vulnerable subjects under

threat. Although their discourse is at times explicitly transmisogynist, they also draw on feelings of empowerment, offering a conditional sense of belonging to "women" as a generalized category (e.g., #sisterhood, #womenempowerment), while hashtags such as #radfemsafespace signal the exclusion of trans identities. Far-right accounts amplify similar narratives, blending resentment with ridicule against trans people, and mobilizing a sense of insecurity and imminent threat, centering particularly on children and cis women.

By situating these affective dynamics within the broader theme of "shifting grounds," the paper demonstrates how affective registers contribute to emergent ruptures and alliances across and within feminist and anti-feminist movements. The analysis reveals how radical feminist and far-right actors capitalize on essentialized understandings of womanhood as inherently tied to vulnerability, imagined as permanently under threat and in need of protection (Bassi & LaFleur, 2022). It also shows how emotions can be channeled into distinct forms of solidarity and community building. Understanding these contestations offers crucial insights into how emotions on TikTok shape political discourse, experiences of belonging, and the trajectories of present and future gender politics.

AEM01 Who Are We (Not)? Affective Potentials of Mediated Identity Work and Politics

PP 0657 Domestic warmth in times of crisis: Defining the material-affective apparatus of the "tradwife" movement of Instagram

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This proposal examines how affects are mobilized through domestic materials and digital affordances within the "tradwife" movement on Instagram to produce a stable, comforting alternative to a perceived contemporary disorder in relation to gender, economics, and culture. While existing scholarship on "tradwives" has focused on analyzing their antifeminist discourse and political underpinnings, the following piece turns attention to what I conceptualize as the material-affective apparatus of tradwives: an assemblage of materials, bodies, and digital technologies that intra-act to render domestic femininity desirable and reproducible. In the article currently awaiting publication, I draw from new materialist theory (Barad, 2013), affect theory (Ahmed, 2010), and Proctor's concept of "totemic nostalgia" (2017), to showcase how domestic artifacts in this context function as totemic mediators of nostalgic yearnings for an idealised past in which homemaking labor, childcare, and economic dependence bestow emotional fulfillment and social stability.

The paper includes a small-scale, in-depth qualitative visual and textual analysis of 14 reels pertaining to the trend "looking for a tradwife", a parody of an earlier viral song "looking for a man in finance" (Emba 2024), sampled around three affective clusters: love, nostalgia, and hate. Love was exhibited through gentle, caring gestures between objects and animals, children, husbands, and affectionate mentions to Christ. Seven users reflected on footnotes and hashtags the aspiration to meet like-minded individuals, with some even declaring the importance of belonging and sorority in the tradwife community. Another sentiment that abides in tradwife posts on Instagram is the longing for an idealized past. Users yearn for sensed stability, tranquility, and security that past times had. Nostalgia is enacted through artisanal practices like the patient fermentation of sourdough, the warmth of baking, vintage dresses, and old music, and an explicit preference for analogic domestic technologies like butter churners. These become carriers of feelings that structure the tradwife ethos in opposition to the hectic, unstable contemporary rhythm of urban lifestyle. This nostalgia is not merely aesthetic, as domestic objects help frame the tradwife ethos. However, the findings also revealed contradictions in the construction of the "happy housewife" ideal (Ahmed, 2010:52) uncovering hatred towards feminists. In doing so, tradwife media constructs affective boundaries: positioning feminism, urban life, and contemporary precarity as sources of misery, and domestic submission as a pathway to happiness and moral clarity. Some creators grudgefully differentiate themselves from feminists sharing unpleasant encounters with them, or through sarcastic jokes in the captions, showcasing how emotional media environments shape belonging, opposition, and future imaginaries. The sarcastic gestures towards the tin foil hats, and tallow, and the visceral presence of meat and the crudeness with which it is maneuvered are examples of how the otherwise tranquil, soft-feminine aesthetics of tradwives is unsettled.

In summary, the paper explores how affects operate through material agents in contemporary digital public spheres. Tradwife posts circulate idealised representations of domestic femininity that promise stability, belonging, and moral grounding amid social and economic uncertainty, demonstrating how neotraditional gender politics are enacted through materials, affects, and technologies.

AEM01 Who Are We (Not)? Affective Potentials of Mediated Identity Work and Politics

PP 0658 Inspired by superstars: Understanding celebrity role-modelling influence through affect

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Calls for more visible role models to inspire women and minorities into successful careers and leadership have dominated media discourse for over a decade. Various superstar CEOs and business celebrities in particular, such as Sheryl Sandberg, Oprah Winfrey, or Satya Nadella, are often portrayed by the media as positive role models. However, research has been

critical of the impact of such elite figures, arguing that they promote and reinforce neoliberal discourses of success and meritocracy and therefore, albeit visible, they have little potential for disrupting the status quo of power relations (Adamson, 2017; Adamson and Kelan, 2019; Bloom & Rhodes, 2018; Littler, 2007; Kansikas, 2021). However, some have argued that the current theorising has not sufficiently explored people's capacity to critically engage with elite role models (Adamson and Kelan, 2024), and we continue to lack tools to explain the appeal of celebrity role models, without dismissing such perceptions through false consciousness-type explanations. To address this, the paper explores how individuals get inspired by prominent celebrity role models (if at all) and how we can understand such engagement better.

Drawing on a diverse sample of 60 in-depth interviews and four focus groups with UK-based professionals from various industries and sectors, I examine how they view and relate to prominent celebrity figures and how they construe the meaning of inspiration in their encounters with such role models. I argue that neither the dominant psychological approaches that theorise role models as 'cognitive constructs', nor social-discursive approaches that see them critically as 'texts' and vehicles of certain ideologies, are sufficient to explain the appeal and influence of these role models, as neither captures the emotional element of the role modelling relationship.

To address this, I draw on the social theory of affect (Grossberg, 1992; Massoumi, 2010). I suggest that inspiration is best understood as an affective force produced in the role-modelling relationship and should be viewed as the key element of the role-modelling influence, as it energises and moves one towards change, in the right circumstances. My analysis shows that most interviewees, men more so than women, do not see role models as a 'holistic' construct, and can be inspired by one aspect relevant to them, while being critical of other traits of the same person. Visible role models, thus, could be personally inspiring (or not) and influential, regardless of their positive or negative public image. The paper extends the current theorising of elite and celebrity role modelling influence by foregrounding the emotive element in role modelling, and positioning inspiration as a central, yet overlooked, mechanism through which visible role models with heightened media presence exert influence. This reframing deepens our theoretical understanding of the role-modelling process and the implications for our approaches to communicating and assessing the role of visible public and media celebrity figures and their effect.

AEM01 Who Are We (Not)? Affective Potentials of Mediated Identity Work and Politics

PP 0659 "Make yourself comfortable": A multimethod approach to studying comfort content consumption on digital platforms

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Digital platforms bring with them a whole set of comforts and discomforts (Beer, 2019). In recent years, users have grown more aware of how important it is to feel safe in digital spaces: since the pandemic, even if audience necessities still balance between the pole of curiosity and old habits (Fortunati & Vincent, 2009), there is an acute growth of preferences towards online interactions that promote well-being other than strong emotional responses (Kruegler & Osloer, 2019). Creators have also become more inclined to share their lives "unfiltered", including mental health struggles and everyday comforts (YouTube, 2023).

This fosters a supportive environment where people find solace in "shared vulnerabilities" (Kreling et al., 2022) and the realisation that others "might be going through the same as them" (Lupinacci, 2021, p. 10). These motivations triggered a surge in so-called "comfort content" consumption (VanArendonk, 2020; Zeitoune, 2022). The term "comfort content" is used to describe content people seek when in need of familiar and soothing: "*It can feel like the presence of a familiar friend without you having to put in the effort from your end*" (Markus, 2021). The popularity of comfort content is continuously growing as the realities of life are rapidly changing, with the increasing cognitive load and omnipresent news fatigue (Fitzpatrick, 2022).

Through a multimethod approach combining qualitative interviews with 20 participants and content analysis of short videos identified by them as "comforting", this research explores how comfort content is perceived, consumed, and integrated into everyday digital routines. Talking about comfort content, participants often address the words *"calm", "safety", "stability", "predictability",* and *"inspiration*", and consistently use spatial metaphors (*"shelter", "safe space", "comfort zone"*) when describing how comfort content functions during stress. Aligned with the existing literature, participants confirm seeking distinctive features: authenticity that signals genuine creator presence, predictability and familiarity reducing cognitive load (Kushlev et al., 2017), relatability and the feeling of "not being alone", nostalgic aesthetics (Jacobsen & Beer, 2021), and low-stakes narratives. Content analysis confirms these user perceptions, demonstrating how formal elements – soft lighting, minimal but appropriate editing, conversational tone, repetitive structures (Bidin & Lokman, 2018) – work together to create atmospheres of comfort and safety.

However, comfort content consumption reveals significant tensions. While users frame this practice as self-care, they also express anxiety about "overexposure" (describing how algorithmic systems can trap them in comfort content loops discouraging engagement with challenging information), concerns about how algorithms could affect young people's wellbeing,

and the possibility that comfort-seeking itself might increase anxiety when framed as "guilty pleasure" consumption (see Peters et al., 2017).

By situating comfort content within affective media practices, this research contributes to understanding how emotions dominate the digital landscape and how the desire for comfort shapes contemporary content consumption, which aligns with consumer forecasts describing "strategic joy" as a key motivation for consumer behaviours (WGSN, 2026). This research demonstrates that comfort content functions as a socio-technical phenomenon where individual emotional needs intersect with attention economy while raising questions about whether algorithmic systems can genuinely provide the refuge we seek online.

AEM02 A Curse or a Blessing? Evoking Emotion in Journalism and Politics

PP 0760 See Gaza through my eyes: Performing journalism as affective labor

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In Gaza, the loss of senior journalists and the constraints imposed by the blockade have compelled young reporters to assume professional responsibilities under extreme conditions. With international media largely excluded, social media has become the primary avenue for documenting and communicating local realities.

Within this context, a form of **affective journalism** emerges, in which affect functions both as the lived experience of witnessing precarity and as a strategic resource employed to generate visibility, mobilize solidarity, and assert narrative authority. Drawing on scholarship on the emotional turn in journalism, this study conceptualizes affect as central to contemporary journalistic labor: it shapes what is reported, how stories are constructed, and how audiences are engaged.

To examine this, the study analyzes the Instagram practices of the most-followed young Gazan journalists—Plestia Alaqad, Bisan Owda, Motaz Azaiza, and Hind Khoudary—demonstrating how Instagram operates not merely as a channel for information but as a medium through which affect is rendered visible and relational, translating personal experiences of trauma into communicative strategies legible to distant audiences.

Methodologically, the study employs multimodal content analysis of Instagram posts, attending to visual, textual, and performative modes that convey affect while interacting with platform affordances. The analysis considers both the affect these journalists experience and the ways it is intentionally deployed to structure attention, foreground moral urgency, and facilitate audience engagement.

Findings indicate that affective labor is simultaneously constitutive and instrumental. It enables journalists to navigate the immediacy of lived crisis while functioning as a resource to amplify visibility, cultivate empathy, and foster transnational solidarity. Posts balance personal vulnerability with professional witnessing, illustrating how affect can be leveraged to communicate the gravity of events without undermining credibility or journalistic authority.

By centering young journalists operating under extreme conditions, this study contributes to understanding the emotional turn in journalism. It demonstrates how affect operates at the intersection of experience and strategy, highlighting that under conditions of extreme precarity, affect is not only what journalists feel but also a tool through which they sustain narratives, negotiate professional responsibilities, and mobilize public attention to contested realities.

AEM02 A Curse or a Blessing? Evoking Emotion in Journalism and Politics

PP 0761 Affects in war journalism – A case study of Finnish journalists reporting from Russo-Ukraine war

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Russo-Ukrainian war stroke a specifically emotional chord in the Finnish nation considering our national history of war with Russia in 1939–1940. Since the beginning of Russias' full scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, exceptionally large group (approx. 100) of Finnish journalists have reported on site from Ukraine, providing the Finnish audience a firsthand look at a nation in crisis through the civilians stories. Finnish war reporting is characterized as having a strong human interest-focus, and news stories combine elements of crisis- and feature journalism (Raippalinna et al. 2025).

Based on extensive ethnographic interview data (n = 210 hours) collected from Finnish journalists, photographers and Ukrainian fixers (Raippalinna, Mononen & Ikonen 2024) this paper examines the role of affects in Finnish war journalism, and asks: How emotions are employed, negotiated and organized concerning journalistic process of war coverage?

Drawing from Johana Kotisovas' (2024; 2025) research on affective epistemology in war journalism, and Castro, Mendes & Coutinhos' (2025) proposal for analytical framework for investigating emotional practices in organizations (see also Voronov & Vince 2010; Beckett & Deuze 2016), the analysis employs the concepts of *affective hierarchies* and *emotional practices* into empirical investigation of journalistic practice and -culture of war reporting portrayed by the journalists, photographers and fixers.

The paper presents preliminary findings of Mononen's doctoral dissertation research in the field of Social Anthropology taking an interdisciplinary look on investigating journalistic culture by combining social anthropology and journalism studies. The dissertation expands from her previous academic research in the field of journalism studies on Finnish war journalisms' cultural proximity and emotion (Mononen 2024 in ECREA), and ethical decision making of Finnish photographers working in Ukraine 2014–2024 (Raippalinna, Mononen, Mykkänen & Uskali 2025) towards an understanding of journalism as an *affective institution* (see also Castro, Mendes & Coutinho 2025; Medeiros & Makhashvili 2022; Makhashvili, Medeiros & Lünenborg 2022) and the role of affects in the journalistic process of war reporting.

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AEM02 A Curse or a Blessing? Evoking Emotion in Journalism and Politics

PP 0762 Resilience is not enough: Portuguese journalists' perspectives on organizational support for emotional health and well-being in the newsroom

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Journalism is a high-pressure profession, frequently exposing its professionals to sensitive, traumatic, and high-stress environments (Deuze, 2022; Pantti & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). A substantial body of research has documented the psychological risks associated with newswork, including burnout, emotional exhaustion or secondary trauma (Feinstein, 2012; Maslach et al., 2001). However, comparatively less attention has been paid to journalists' own assessments of how news organizations can support their emotional well-being. Existing studies indicate that journalists rely primarily on their personal and informal coping resources rather than on the mental health initiatives formally provided by news organizations to manage work-related stress (Šimunjak & Menke, 2022; Huxford & Hopper, 2020).

This research aims to investigate the perspectives of Portuguese journalists on organizational strategies for emotional health, analyzing the gap between the professional demands and the support mechanisms provided by media organizations. Specifically, this study aims to look into these research questions: RQ1: Which mental health initiatives and support resources within media organizations do journalists have access to and value most, and which do they perceive as lacking? RQ2: How do journalists evaluate the effectiveness of mental health resources in their newsrooms?, and RQ3: How do journalists describe their relationship with mental health and well-being in the context of news organizations and peer interactions?

Adopting a quantitative research design, this study is based on a questionnaire applied to Portuguese journalists working across several media platforms, between January and July 2025. The analysis includes 359 valid answers to help understand how organizational practices, such as mental health resources, workload management, and emotional training, are perceived and implemented.

The findings show that 95% of respondents acknowledge that their work directly impacts their mental health and emotional well-being. The severity of this strain is evidenced by the fact that 32% of the sampled journalists have already required clinical leave due to psychological issues. Despite the prevalence of emotional risk, the data reveals lack of support within Portuguese newsrooms. Only 25% of journalists report that their companies offer any form of psychological support, and only 5% of newsrooms include a dedicated psychologist. Furthermore, the study identifies cultural barriers within leadership: 51% of participants find it difficult to discuss mental health with their superiors, and 52% do not feel that their health and safety are treated as organizational priorities. Proactive strategies, such as regular debriefing sessions (present

in only 18% of cases) and formal work-life balance policies (9%), remain the exception rather than the rule. Results also show a strong demand for organisational support, particularly psychotherapy, although journalists revealed distrust of employer-mediated help.

Keywords

Journalism, Well-being, Mental Health, Organizational Strategy, Burnout, Portuguese Media, Newsroom Culture.

AEM02 A Curse or a Blessing? Evoking Emotion in Journalism and Politics

PP 0763 Empathy across modalities – A comparative q sort study of text-image-relations in war photography

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Empathy is a key concept for understanding how audiences react to media coverage of conflict and war (Müller & Christ, 2023). Although contested (Lobb, 2017), most scholars agree that empathy encompasses cognitive and affective dimensions and always involves both the self and others (Guthridge & Giummarra, 2021). Empathy does not necessarily require physical co-presence but can also be elicited under mediated conditions (Höijer, 2004): Studies have shown that empathic reactions can foster prosocial emotions toward those depicted, while also being the basis for traumatizing viewers (Kaplan, 2011). Images play a particularly important role here, as they address both cognitive and affective levels and significantly influence how wars and their consequences are seen and perceived. Compared to other modalities, visual stimuli tend to elicit stronger effects than text (Geise & Xu, 2024). Yet, images rarely appear without textual elements in media reports, which raises the question of how empathic effects in audiences unfold in combined image-text stimuli.

Against this background, two Q Sort studies (Watts & Stenner, 2012) were conducted on the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, each with 25 participants. While the first study used 33 press photographs as statements, the second study used the same press photographs but included their accompanying textual captions. Both Q sorts were identical in set-up, using a forced-distribution approach. Results show how different modalities influence emotional responses and that empathy as an emotional reaction serves as a critical concept for analyzing text-image relations in visual communication studies, particularly in the context of war and conflict. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how participants' individual properties shape their assessment of images and texts (Paananen et al., 2024), providing insight into the interplay of visual and textual motifs and empathetic audience reactions.

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AEM02 A Curse or a Blessing? Evoking Emotion in Journalism and Politics

PP 0764 The politics of race and emotions in reform UK's Facebook campaigning

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Anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies have become increasingly central to British and European politics in recent years. Whilst often claiming not to be racist, hostility to migrants bears the hallmarks of racist dehumanisation. This paper examines how immigrants and immigration have been negatively racialised in Facebook content from the UK's increasingly popular Reform Party, in the month leading up to the 2024 general election. Drawing on theories that analyse race in relation to narratives of threat and deservingness, and theories of the role of emotions in politics, we analyse 223 Facebook posts published

between the 1st June and 4th July 2024. We demonstrate how Reform UK constructs immigrant men, particularly those arriving via small boats, as a threat to Britain — endangering public resources, national and public security, and cultural integrity.

The analysis highlights how reinforcing social divisions, by evoking emotions, is a central mechanism of racist discourse. Fear and anger are mobilised by conveying a message of imminent threat, using repetitive language, dehumanising numerical representations, pejorative tropes and visual imagery. Anger, fear and apprehension about immigration circulated in Reform's posts, were central in constructing a racial grievance. Racialising the threatening immigrants vis-à-vis the decent and generous native Britons in relation to each other enables a grievance that is not concerned with deprivation itself, but rather is a response to an unjust deprivation. The racialisations expressed in Reform's social media messaging were also repeated in one of the largest anti-migration protests seen in the UK in recent years, held in London, and led by far-right activist Tommy Robinson in September 2025.

The findings illuminate how contemporary racialisation operates through threat narratives that express a form of racial grievance, and provide discursive groundwork for anti-immigrant mobilisations. The study demonstrates the continued salience of race in UK politics despite its formal absence from public debate.

This begs the question- what is to be done in response?

AEM03 Does it Feel Right? Emotional Connection and Trust in Media

PP 1076 The comfort of normality: Affective sense-making in alternative media repertoires

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Although interest in alternative media users has grown in recent years (Brems, 2025; Schwarzenegger, 2021, 2022), research has focused primarily on why people abandon mainstream journalism and turn to alternative sources. We still know relatively little about the epistemic reassurance, sense of recognition, and emotional comfort that users may find when engaging with these "other media." This gap is particularly pressing in times of epistemic instability (Harambam, 2020) and the increasing role of alternative media (Newman, 2025). Alternative media, as affect generators (Lünenborg 2022), are particularly effective in activating emotions when guiding media choice and affective sense-making (Schöppl & Schwarzenegger, 2025).

This study approaches alternative media as *emotional comfort zones* that offer validation and resonance amid broader conditions of epistemic instability. Theoretically, we build on Mau et al.'s (2023) taxonomy of trigger points, which conceptualizes contemporary conflicts as crystallizing around moments where taken-for-granted orders of normality are perceived to be violated and societal consensus turns into dissensus. Trigger points emerge where expectations about rules, routines, and shared common sense are disrupted by issues such as gender politics, or climate policies. In these moments of perceived order loss and identity threat, emotions become central, as actors seek to defend, restore, or redefine what counts as "normal." We argue that alternative media provide affective infrastructures in which such breaches of normality can be interpreted, personalized, and emotionally processed, offering users spaces to reaffirm moral order, belonging, and epistemic orientation (Bartsch et al., 2024).

Empirically, the paper draws on a three-year qualitative longitudinal panel study (n = 33) on users of alternative media, combining interviews, media diaries, and media repertoire cards across three waves. The temporal design is essential for tracing how affective engagements, media repertoires, and identity narratives evolve in response to shifting trigger points.

Focusing on *normality* as a central yet underexplored narrative, our results demonstrate how alternative media provide the *comfort of normality*: they validate perceptions of norm violations, particularly at trigger points, and reassure users that it is others – often political, media, or cultural elites – who deviate from common sense, from what is „normal". However, negotiations remain fluid and ambivalent: users oscillate between feeling victimized, exceptional, and "simply normal," and these constellations shift across issues, platforms, and over time. While previous studies (Chouliaraki, 2024; Mayer & Parks, 2025; Roberts & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020; Schwarzenegger, 2021, 2022) have emphasised narratives of *victimhood* and *exceptionality* as integral to alternative media, we find that the narrative of *normality* is equally important.

By foregrounding the affective search for *normality* within broader constellations of victimhood and exceptionality, this study contributes to the emotional turn (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020) in communication research. In line with ECREA 2026's theme *Shifting Grounds*, it shows how users seek emotional stabilization at moments when consensus fractures, how affective media practices foster connections and imagined communities of „normal people and viewpoints" and how these comfort zones shape the futures users envision under conditions of epistemic instability.

AEM03 Does it Feel Right? Emotional Connection and Trust in Media

PP 1077 Anger predicts individual misinformation sharing but not aggregate dynamics: a multi-level analysis of Austrian Twitter 2019–2023

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Understanding how users interact with trustworthy and untrustworthy news online is crucial for combating misinformation. While research shows that high-arousal negative emotions predict misinformation sharing (Ecker et al., 2022), the temporal relationship between emotions and engagement with untrustworthy content remains underexplored. Moreover, existing research has examined either aggregate patterns or individual mechanisms, rarely both simultaneously, masking how mechanisms differ across levels of analysis (Leach & Bou Zeineddine, 2021). In this study, we examined how emotions predict news sharing at both collective and individual levels. We analyzed ~29,000 Austrian Twitter users and their tweets from January 2019 to March 2023, capturing both pre-pandemic and pandemic dynamics, and employed natural language processing to detect anger and fear expression and NewsGuard ratings to identify untrustworthy news sources.

Our findings reveal a divergence between levels: At the collective level, untrustworthy news sharing and emotional expression operate as largely independent processes, each responding primarily to external events rather than mutually reinforcing each other (Goldenberg et al., 2020). At the individual level, however, anger consistently predicts increased sharing of all news types, with particularly strong effects for untrustworthy content: Users with one standard deviation higher anger baseline show 142% greater odds of sharing untrustworthy news. Temporal dynamics of anger expression (including variability, instability, and inertia; Houben et al., 2015) all predict engagement with untrustworthy sources, while fear expression predicts decreased news sharing, with variability reducing odds of untrustworthy news sharing by 72%. Analyzing emotional states before and after sharing reveals that elevated anger precedes untrustworthy news sharing, but sharing does not reduce emotional expression, suggesting that misinformation engagement is not primarily motivated by emotion regulation.

These findings demonstrate that individual-level mechanisms can coexist with collective-level independence. The minority of users who share misinformation tend to be emotionally distinctive, but collective spikes are driven by events affecting all users. This multi-level perspective has implications: platform-level interventions should focus on rapid response during crisis periods, while individual-level interventions should address psychological needs (Douglas et al., 2017; Ecker et al., 2022) among the motivated minority of users sharing misinformation (Petersen et al., 2023).

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AEM03 Does it Feel Right? Emotional Connection and Trust in Media

PP 1078 Beyond fact-checks: testing cognitive and affective interventions to neutralize misinformation's persuasive effects

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Introduction

The persuasive impact of misinformation can persist even after it has been factually corrected (e.g., Johnson & Seifert, 1994). This phenomenon, known as continued influence, shows that although people may update their factual beliefs, negative impressions formed by the initial misinformation often endure (Lewandowsky et al., 2012; Thorson, 2016). Standard fact-checks are crucial for correcting false beliefs but are frequently insufficient to fully neutralize these lingering persuasive effects (Van Huijstee et al., 2025). One explanation is that fact-checks primarily target belief accuracy, while broader attitudes inferred from misinformation remain unaddressed. This creates a need for interventions that directly target these inferred attitudes. The present paper reports two studies testing the efficacy of three such interventions:

one cognitive intervention requiring active engagement, and two affective interventions relying on passive associative learning. Specifically, we examine a counter-explanation task (Greitemeyer, 2019; Siebert & Siebert, 2023) and evaluative and classical conditioning (De Houwer et al., 2001; Olson & Fazio, 2001).

Method

Two experimental studies were conducted (N = 443 and N = 614). In both, participants were exposed to misinformation via a fabricated social media post alleging that a fictional individual had committed insurance fraud. Participants were then assigned to different conditions to test intervention effects. Study 1 examined a cognitive counter-explanation task, in which participants actively generated arguments supporting an opposing conclusion (e.g., reasons why the subject is a good person). Study 2 tested two affective audio-visual interventions: evaluative conditioning, which paired the subject with pleasant music, and classical conditioning, which repeatedly followed an image of the subject with images of highly attractive people. Across both studies, dependent variables included explicit attitudes measured with semantic differential scales, and implicit attitudes measured using the Affect Misattribution Procedure (Bar-Anan & Nosek, 2012).

Results

Exposure to the fabricated misinformation led to significantly more negative explicit and implicit attitudes toward the subject compared to a neutral control condition. Both studies also showed that a standard fact-check alone was insufficient to eliminate these effects: participants who received only a correction continued to hold more negative attitudes than those in the control group.

In Study 1, combining a factual correction with the counter-explanation task produced a marginally significant improvement in explicit attitudes compared to correction alone; no significant improvement was observed for implicit attitudes. Notably, implicit attitudes in this combined condition did return to the level of the neutral control group. In contrast, Study 2 found no evidence that either conditioning technique improved explicit or implicit attitudes beyond the effects of a standard fact-check.

Discussion

Overall, the findings indicate only modest additional benefits of the tested interventions over traditional fact-checking in reducing attitudinal effects of misinformation. Nonetheless, the approach of directly targeting inferred attitudes rather than focusing solely on veracity remains promising. To enhance external validity, the present studies used relatively low-intensive and low-immersive interventions—for example, by requiring only two counter-explanations or presenting brief, low-production-value videos. Future research should systematically vary message characteristics to more rigorously test the potential of this approach to counteract misinformation's persuasive effects.

AEM03 Does it Feel Right? Emotional Connection and Trust in Media

PP 1079 Trump gaza: The impact of Trump's neocolonialistic AI fantasy on geopolitics from a film-psychological perspective

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The 33-second, AI-generated video of a Gaza fantasy Trump posted on February 26, 2025, on his own Truth Social network[1] reveals a neoimperialistic nature of the White House's new geopolitics.[2] The video that was initially created as political satire[3] shows, among other things, a monumental golden Trump statue, topless Trump and Netanyahu enjoying cocktails at a pool, and bearded Hamas fighters as belly dancers. It immediately went viral and gathered a vast number of comments on every social media platform where it appeared. However, positive comments on Trump's alternative reality for the Gaza region are getting lost in the sea of rejection. Even among Trump's supporters, there is a lack of willingness to accept such a neocolonialistic vision.[4] Accordingly, the viral video hit the headlines of major media worldwide. The journalistic assessments largely validate negative attitudes and affects toward Trump's speculative fiction presented in *Trump Gaza*.

The intensity of Trump's fantasy's rejection in social and professional media is reflected in the intensity of the video's aesthetics. This paper analyzes the audiovisual strategies in *Trump Gaza* from a film-psychological—i.e., transdisciplinary—perspective.[5] Thirty-four shots in 33 seconds indicate a highly rhythmic editing that can be conceived as a quantitative strategy of overwhelming. Moreover, a qualitative strategy of emotionalization can be assumed because recipients experience exaggerated (statue), grotesque (pool), and absurd (Hamas dancers) images eliciting a range of intense emotions like negative surprise, disgust, anger, sadness, or fear. It is mainly the emotion of fear found at the micro level of analysis that leads to the feeling of anxiety (meso level), an uncanny atmosphere (macro level), and, in many ways, distorted 'entertainment' (meta level). Correspondingly, distortion characterizes Trump's geopolitical strategies, paving the way for radicalization and facilitating fascist tendencies.

Besides its film-psychological endeavor, this paper presents the so-called Four-Level Theory of International Relations with Gaza's re-creation and the relocation of its population as exemplary political instruments on the micro level, neocolonialism as a political model or program on the meso level, neoimperialism as a political theory on the macro level, and neorealism as a political paradigm on the meta level. These four levels correspond to those used in the film-psychological analysis

of *Trump Gaza*, connecting historical–political and (film-)psychological considerations. Altogether, the significance of the culture war in media and politics becomes clear.

1. See Trump, Donald J. (2025): "Trump Gaza." In: *Truth Social*, https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114068387897265338 (Sep 13, 2025).
2. Cf. Odenheimer, Natan/Yuhas, Alan (Feb 26, 2025): "'Fantasy' AI Video, Shared by Trump, of Gaza as Luxury Resort Draws Scorn." In: *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/26/world/middleeast/trump-gaza-ai-video.html (Sep 13, 2025).
3. See Hall, Rachel (Mar 6, 2025): "'Trump Gaza' AI video intended as political satire, says creator." In: *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/mar/06/trump-gaza-ai-video-intended-as-political-satire-says-creator (Sep 13, 2025).
4. Cf. Holmes, Oliver/Owen, Paul (Feb 26, 2025): "Trump faces Truth Social backlash over AI video of Gaza with topless Netanyahu and bearded bellydancers." In: *The Guardian*, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/26/backlash-trump-shares-ai-created-video-reimagined-gaza (Sep 13, 2025).
5. See Pibert, Johann (2019): "Grundzüge einer affektiv-integrativen Filmpsychologie [Foundations of an Affective–Integrative Film Psychology]." In: *ffk Journal* 4, pp. 141–154, https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/3692.

AEM04 Creepy, Scary, or Curious? Emotional Impact of Media Technologies and Content

PP 1176 Laughter and regulation: The affective politics of representing Northeastern-ness in Chinese media

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This paper investigates how laughter operates as a politically mediated affect in contemporary representations of Chinese Northeastern-ness. Once known as the industrial heartland and celebrated as the "eldest son of the republic," China's Northeast region has been culturally marginalised and economically dispossessed in the post-reform era. Following the state-owned enterprise restructuring of the 1990s, the region underwent widespread deindustrialisation and mass layoffs, triggering media discourses of Northeast China's backwardness and social decay. This structural marginalisation provides the backdrop against which Northeastern bodies, dialects, and performance styles became recurrent sites of ridicule, pity, and amusement in various Chinese media.

Building on Bakhtin's (1984) concept of carnivalesque laughter and grotesque realism, and Giamario's (2022) theorisation of laughter as a political affect, this paper examines how laughter—particularly in Northeastern folk comedic forms such as televised *Errenzhuan*, *Xiaopin* (sketch comedy), and livestream performances—functions not merely as spontaneous joy but as an affective mode of ideological regulation. I focus especially on the female grotesque figures, often portrayed as brash, vulgar, rural, and excessive, whose perceived "lack of *suzhi* (personal quality)" marks them as objects of both laughter and contempt. Their ambivalent position—as simultaneously laughable and desirable—encapsulates broader tensions in the social negotiation of gender, class, and regional hierarchy.

I investigate how such grotesque bodies were celebrated throughout the 1990s on the most-watched Chinese TV programme *The Spring Festival Gala*—particularly through Northeastern comedian Zhao Benshan's iconic performances that mixed satire, sexual innuendo, and rustic wisdom to challenge social hierarchies—yet were later censored or forcibly sanitised under campaigns of *Zheng Nengliang* (positive energy) and cultural refinement under the rule of President Xi Jinping after 2014. I further explore how, in the digital era, these forms of laughter have been re-commodified: influencers like "Northeast Tiger Brother" deploy grotesque personas—featuring loud Northeastern dialects, flashy outfits, exaggerated and laughable postures—to generate algorithmic visibility and monetisable emotional reactions. In this way, laughter becomes embedded in platform capitalism and what Rofel (2007) terms "consumer fundamentalism," where affective excess and regional stigma are repackaged into consumable, profitable content.

By tracing how Northeastern-ness is gradually rendered grotesque, laughable, and affectively out-of-place, this paper examines how laughter participates in constructing regional and gendered boundaries and affective hierarchies in China.

The contribution of this paper lies in repositioning laughter as a mediated, historically contingent affective practice, shaped by ideological campaigns, regional marginalisation, and platform economies in the Chinese context. It foregrounds the need to theorise laughter as a key modality through which social and ideological power, affective citizenship, and national imaginaries are regulated and reproduced in post-socialist China.

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AEM04 Creepy, Scary, or Curious? Emotional Impact of Media Technologies and Content

PP 1177 Empirically exploring the affect dynamics of dataveillance-induced chilling effects over time

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Dataveillance, i.e., the automatic and continuous collection and analysis of data traces, is a continuous feature of everyday digital life, evoking temporally dynamic affective and behavioral responses. Individuals' sense of dataveillance–the diffuse feeling of being monitored online–is gradually heightened through repeated encounters with triggers such as privacy notices and dataveillance-related news (Author, 2025). We conceptualize this sense of dataveillance as an affective state, i.e., an embodied and often unconscious feeling, rather than a purely cognitive perception. Situated within broader affective atmospheres of surveillance (Ellis et al., 2013), it can evolve over time as individuals habituate to recurring triggers, regulate their feelings, or reinterpret experiences. As the sense of dataveillance can linger and accumulate, it can ultimately inhibit legitimate digital communication behaviors such as searching for information, sharing opinions, and disclosing personal information. These so-called chilling effects can undermine individuals' autonomy and democratic rights (Penney, 2025; White & Zimbardo, 1975). Their temporally dynamic processes are crucial in understanding how chilling effects emerge, persist, and transform. Yet, research on the temporal dimensions of chilling effects remains scarce. This study draws on affect dynamics (Kuppens & Verduyn, 2017) and chilling effects research (Büchi et al., 2022) to investigate how chilling effects unfold over time in response to repeated exposure to triggers of a sense of dataveillance. We examine the affective dynamics of the sense of dataveillance and digital communication behaviors in terms of both temporal changes (trajectories, reactivity to triggers, variability) and temporal dependencies (inertia and mutual augmentation).

Using the data of a representative, longitudinal online field experiment in Switzerland, we ran mixed-effects models to assess temporal changes, and Bayesian multilevel SEMs to test temporal dependencies. At each wave of the experiment, participants were randomly assigned to either a treatment condition, in which dataveillance was made salient through triggers, or a control condition. After each exposure, participants reported their sense of dataveillance and their comfort with three digital communication behaviors: searching for information, sharing opinions, and disclosing personal information.

The results reveal that chilling effects unfold as subtle but consistent affective and behavioral dynamics: individuals developed a relatively stable sense of dataveillance while continuing to respond to recurring triggers with small, persistent effects. The sense of dataveillance first increased and then stabilized but was consistently heightened through exposure to triggers. Variability in the sense of dataveillance was mainly between individuals, whereas variability in communication behaviors was primarily within individuals, suggesting greater situational volatility. Comfort with digital communication was momentarily reduced by exposure to triggers. Both the sense of dataveillance and communication behaviors showed inertia but no mutual augmentation.

By integrating time and affect into chilling effects research, this study offers innovative insights into individual experiences and adaptations to dataveillance in everyday life. Rather than discrete acts of self-censorship, chilling effects unfold as a dual temporal and adaptive affective process: a gradual stabilization of the sense of dataveillance alongside persistent reactivity to triggers. Hence, self-inhibition can emerge from affective adaptations to environments characterized by pervasive dataveillance, even in ordinary, low-stakes online contexts.

AEM04 Creepy, Scary, or Curious? Emotional Impact of Media Technologies and Content

PP 1178 From "yay" to "meh" and back again: Knowledge workers' emotional trajectories of communicative AI adoption

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The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), understood as machine-learning models capable of producing human-like outputs in the form of text, visual, or audio responses to messages (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025), has intensified societal narratives regarding job loss due to automation (Lucia et al., 2025). In public discourse, generative AI is often seen as a threat to professional identity, impinging on what workers especially in creative industries see as the heart of their expertise: Their ability to create original content (Coddington, 2014). This is because, as Lewis et al. (2025) argue, generative AI, for all its limitations, has reached its potential to fit into the role of a creator/communicator, a role previously reserved to humans.

Consequently, in this study, we examine how knowledge workers emotionally adapt to the arrival of large language model based tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot) to the workplace. We draw from human-machine communication and the concept of communicative AI (commAI), defined as algorithmic tools communicating in natural language that are able to adapt to real-life conversational situations (Guzman & Lewis, 2020) to theorize communicative AI as an affective

identity threat. An identity threat is "any discursively constituted thought or feeling that challenges one of an individual or group's preferred identity narratives" (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1318). Given that many knowledge work professions are essentially about text production, communicative AI's capacity to produce large amounts of (seemingly) credible text can be argued to pose a threat to workers' identities and, consequently, lead to a variety of emotional responses.

Empirically, we draw from 33 semi-structured interviews with Finnish knowledge workers from multiple fields (e.g., media, higher education, IT consulting). At the time of the interviews (May–December 2024), the early adopters among our interviewees had around two years of use experience with communicative AI. Conversely, those that had waited longer to start using the technology, reported tenures from three to six months. At this point, we have conducted a preliminary screening of the dataset. We will be engaging in a more systematic qualitative analysis using the phronetic iterative approach (Tracy et al., 2024) during the first half of 2026.

Our preliminary findings indicate that the interviewees' affective trajectories of commAI adoption can be roughly grouped into five types: (1) Going from suspicion to inspiration, (2) from initial excitement to eventual disillusionment, (3) starting out enthusiastic and remaining so, (4) starting out fearful, becoming disappointed, and (5) remaining in ambivalence. These trajectories are based on individual reactions, but they are also social in the sense that they are influenced by cultural norms, social structures, technologies and media texts related to communicative AI (see Ahmed, 2004). Moreover, the data also indicate that depending on how much of an identity threat an individual knowledge worker sees commAI to be shapes their emotional trajectory in the adoption process of the technology. Specifically, interviewees whose core tasks are most reminiscent of what a communicative AI is capable of doing (e.g., producing creative output, such as text) are most likely to perceive it as an identity threat.

AEM04 Creepy, Scary, or Curious? Emotional Impact of Media Technologies and Content

PP 1179 Creepy or Curious? Exploring people's affective experiences with digital voice assistants' self-activating

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Digital voice assistants such as Google Assistant and Amazon Alexa are popular home devices. Their human-mimicking features allow users to interact with them as if they were another person. However, users report that the assistants sometimes act without user initiation, which previous research has shown to make them aware of the devices' associations with privacy issues. This paper further examines the moods and sensations people experience during these self-activations.

The paper builds on video-recorded qualitative interviews with people living with digital voice assistants, which included participant-led activities such as map drawing and a home tour to explore participants' experiences and sense-making. The conceptual framework takes its starting point in Sundén's theorisation of affect and technology through breaks, disconnections and delays. She suggests viewing these as "formative for how we can both sense and make sense of digital connectivity" (Sundén, 2018, p. 63). This paper draws on Sundén's perspective to view accidental interactions as breaks in connectivity. They are not a disconnection but can be viewed as a glitch or a faulty connection, which breaks with participants' expectations of how the connectivity should unfold. These breaks shed light on how people sense and make sense of the constant connectivity of the home through digital voice assistants. To further operationalise how the break can shape our sense and sensemaking of technological attachments, I draw from critical algorithm studies and Bucher's (2017) concept of algorithmic imaginaries. Bucher describes algorithmic imaginaries as "ways of thinking about what algorithms are, what they should be, how they function and what these imaginations in turn make possible" (2017, pp. 39–40). It is about the spaces where people and algorithms meet and what that meeting produces. Accidental interactions, as breaks in connectivity, are situations where silent aspects of the technology are made visible to people and generate affective expressions.

The analysis shows that accidental interactions highlight the ambivalence in affective experiences of living with connected devices, arguing that people's affective responses are tied to sensations of exposure and vulnerability to external influence, for instance from commercial companies. The study underscores the importance of home as a site for these interactions, arguing that accidental interactions temporarily destabilise the home from being experienced as closed, private and safe, to exposed, public and unsafe. However, the paper further argues that these bodily sensations and people's sense-making of them may serve as a starting point for raising awareness of privacy issues related to smart home devices.

AEM04 Creepy, Scary, or Curious? Emotional Impact of Media Technologies and Content

PP 1180 Disconnection, uncertainty and anxiety: Parents' feelings on interpretation of environmental and climate news

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This paper examines parents' engagement with climate and environmental news in England to highlight that their perception is shaped by their dual role of a caregiver and protectors for their children and as individuals. This longitudinal

study, based on 30 semi-structured interviews and WhatsApp diaries, finds that parents navigate intertwined feelings of disconnection, uncertainty and anxiety upon engaging with environmental coverage.

The current breadth of literature states that even though climate change has been recognised as an immediate matter of concern, environmental news coverage still grapples to engage and retain public attention (Luebke et al., 2025). Arguably, due to reasons like overuse of scientific jargon (Forgács, 2024), complex news framings (Nisbet, 2009) and also its overlapping existence with other news beats (Fahy, 2017). While audiences are left to interpret these complex intricacies on their own, they are also exposed to 'trending topics' of the environmental news that are shaped by algorithms, which could be spreading misinformation (Sultana et al., 2024). These stories are often episodic, politicised, sensationalised and are circulated by the news outlets following influencer-like strategies conforming to algorithmic pressures (Cotter, 2019). Limited but few studies (Spiteri, 2025) have pointed out that such news stories can evoke emotions of hopelessness, anxiety, banality, confusion and uncertainty. But parents as a group have not been studied enough. Parents' worries extend beyond the present and into the imagined futures, centred around their children's wellbeing (Das, 2024). Hence, they often take up dual responsibility of protecting their children from being the inheritors of environmental consequences (Cripps, 2017) while also bringing them up to become resilient adults capable of navigating future risk. However, little is known about parents' emotional responses to environmental coverage and how that shapes their parenting practices.

This paper addresses that gap by thematically analysing the interview and WhatsApp diary responses of parents based in England to reveal that interpretation of environmental news requires emotional and practical labour that evokes a combined feeling of disconnection, anxiety and uncertainty. These are not isolated emotional responses but intersecting ones. The analysis indicates that these emotional responses occurred due to being exposed to information overload and an anxiety-driven tone of news coverage. Parents reported a heightened disconnection, anxiety and uncertainty for environmental that lacked local relevance or clear guidance, often compounded by their limited scientific knowledge. Their response highlighted that their engagement occurred in two terrains, as an individual audience and as caregiver for their children. Hence, the study concludes by advocating for a more locally relevant, sustained and actionable reporting, which could encourage parents towards an informed engagement with climate and environmental issues.

AGC01 Navigating Platformization: Everyday Digital Practices, Aging Bodies, and Institutional Interfaces

PP 0504 "Without YouTube my day couldn't start": Exploring engagement with digital audio entertainment as an everyday practice that supports wellbeing for older adults

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Digital audio entertainment, for example music streaming, podcasts and audiobooks, is increasingly ubiquitous in everyday life, and therefore has the potential to support hedonic wellbeing (happiness) and eudaimonic wellbeing (a sense of meaning) (Reinecke and Oliver, 2017). However, research focussed on the uses and impacts of audio media and digital listening has typically concentrated on the experiences of adolescents and young adults (Gagne, 2024; Tattersall Wallin, 2022; Calvo-Sotelo and D'Ancona, 2019; Wadley et al., 2019). While some work has investigated the perspectives of older adults (Poerio and Totterdell, 2020; Kim, Oh and Kim, 2021), their intersectional experiences remain largely underexplored. It is important that this gap is addressed, not only to generate insights into the complex and nuanced digital media lives of older adults (Hjorth et al., 2025; Fernández-Ardèvol, Sawchuk and Grenier, 2017), but also to ascertain the extent to which digital audio entertainment can be used to support wellbeing across the life course. Recognising older adults as active consumers of digital audio media contests reductive narratives of aging and helps to redress media discourses that overlook experiences of later life.

This presentation shares findings from an empirical study undertaken in Australia that used qualitative, arts-based elicitation methods (inspired by McGrane, Gerber and Hjorth, 2025) to examine how digital audio entertainment can influence the wellbeing of older adults in everyday life. There was a particular focus on exploring the experiences of older adults from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds because they are underrepresented in the current literature. Four workshops were facilitated, involving 28 participants who mapped their engagements with digital audio entertainment and discussed how these entanglements relate to personal wellbeing. Workshop participants took part in three activities: 1) a warm-up exercise with post it notes; 2) mapping a day-in-the-life of digital audio entertainment labelled with emotions and feelings; 3) writing a postcard that describes a perfect playlist.

Findings show that digital audio entertainment has the potential to support emotional, social, psychological and spiritual wellbeing in everyday life. Following data analysis, five themes were identified: everyday digital audio entertainment is important for wellbeing as a source of connection, participation and reminiscence; digital audio entertainment can create awareness by enabling listeners to learn about new topics and broaden personal perspectives; digital audio entertainment can provide company which is available at any time of day or night; digital audio can support spiritual practices by providing access to prayers, sermons or devotional music; digital audio entertainment has limitations as a wellbeing practice due to negative content or inaccessibility.

The study concludes that unique features of digital audio entertainment, such as on-demand access, mobility and personalisation, combined with diverse listening practices, can support the hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing of older adults in everyday life. However, accessing digital audio can also pose challenges and prompt ambivalence. Consequently, non-digital entertainment routines and activities also remain popular, necessary and meaningful for older adults.

AGC01 Navigating Platformization: Everyday Digital Practices, Aging Bodies, and Institutional Interfaces

PP 0505 Retired women clocking in on Douyin: Mutual likes groups for senior women

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Douyin has become an important site of everyday media engagement for middle-aged and older users in China. This paper investigates the phenomenon of Douyin mutual-like groups among retired Chinese women aged 55 and above, focusing on how these groups organize daily media practices and reshape post-retirement life. Situated within the broader context of gendered aging and social invisibility, this study examines how participation in such groups enables both self-recognition and new forms of constraint.

Drawing on media practice theory (Couldry, 2004; 2012), this research conceptualizes engagement in mutual-like groups not simply as content consumption or self-expression, but as a set of routinized, socially organized media practices embedded in everyday life. Media practice theory shifts analytical attention from platform features or individual motivations to what users repeatedly do with media, how these practices structure time, social relations, and meaning-making, and how they are shaped by wider power relations.

Methodologically, the study employs online participant observation of 300 videos and interactions within two mutual-liking groups, combined with in-depth interviews with 6 group members. Online participant observation allows the researcher to capture media practices as they unfold in everyday contexts, rather than treating content as isolated texts. These groups

typically have the most of 1,000 participants and are led by a group owner who enforces rules regarding daily posting and mass liking. Other members are generally invited to join the group by the owner, and most are retired women. Members are required to complete two main tasks: uploading one video per day and indiscriminately liking others' videos regardless of content. These practices transform Douyin participation into a form of disciplined routine resembling "clocking in" for work after retirement.

The findings reveal that, unlike mutual-aid groups on platforms such as Instagram that often aim at brand collaboration or commercial growth, mutual-like groups among older women primarily cater to personal vanity and the desire for social recognition. Participants frequently use exaggerated beauty filters, youthful visual effects, and popular background music to lip-sync or dance, emphasizing youthful aesthetics and high like counts. These practices reflect a shift in self-perception that from long-term self-effacing roles centered on caregiving and domestic labor to a renewed focus on the self, visibility, and personal enjoyment. However, the study also find while initial participation offers a sense of purpose, social connection, and enhanced self-worth, the task-oriented nature of daily posting and liking gradually leads to fatigue, emotional exhaustion, and time pressure. Over time, their routinized and task-oriented nature gradually aligns with forms of unpaid platform labor. Some participants eventually withdraw from groups. Although their visibility metrics decline, they feel greater enjoyment in the creative process and increased attention to offline relationships and everyday pleasures.

By focus on older women's everyday media practices, this study contributes to the research on aging, gender, and platform cultures. It demonstrates how the socially organized media practices restructure everyday lives, identities, and sense of value of marginalized users in later life.

AGC01 Navigating Platformization: Everyday Digital Practices, Aging Bodies, and Institutional Interfaces

PP 0506 Inclusive cultural communication in ageing societies: Institutional strategies and older audiences in a comparative regional context

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In times of shifting communicative grounds marked by global demographic ageing, digital transformation, and changing patterns of cultural participation, communication practices toward older adults become an increasingly important field of institutional strategy and cultural policy. In this comparative study, we examine how national cultural institutions communicate with older audiences and how older adults perceive, access, and engage with cultural offerings in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Serbia, and the Republic of Bulgaria. Focusing on the capitals as key socio-cultural centres, we explore whether current communication strategies adequately respond to the communicative needs and practices of older audiences as audiences with longest accumulated communication and cultural participation trajectories.

Methodologically, we combine semi-structured interviews with representatives of 20 national cultural institutions and an online survey with 83 older respondents (62+) across the three countries, based on a convenience sample. This mixed-methods approach enables an analysis of both institutional communication strategies and the lived communicative practices of older audiences. We build on established theories and models in aging, communication, and culture to explore the intersection of age, media use, and cultural participation in a rapidly changing communication environment, emphasizing the relevance of older audiences not only as recipients, but also as potential contributors to participatory, co-educational, and co-creational communication approaches.

The findings indicate that the majority of national cultural institutions in all three countries lack systematic and strategically developed communication approaches specifically tailored to older audiences. Older adults are rarely addressed as distinct and active audiences, despite demographic trends and policy discourses emphasizing active ageing and lifelong cultural participation. At the same time, survey results reveal divided attitudes among older respondents. While a minority do not perceive the need for specialized communication, the majority express clear demand for more direct, personalized, and age-sensitive communication, as well as for cultural programs that acknowledge their interests, experiences, and accumulated cultural knowledge.

Regarding media use, television remains primary source of information for many respondents; however, a significant proportion report regular use of digital devices, the Internet, and social networks. This challenges institutional assumptions that older audiences are largely digitally illiterate or unreachable through digital channels. The mismatch between institutional perceptions and the actual communication and media practices of older adults, points to a communication gap that limits sustained engagement. The findings suggest the need for clearer and more differentiated communication strategies, as well as targeted educational initiatives that link older adults' existing communication and media habits with cultural content and institutional communication goals. Similarities between the three countries are more pronounced than their differences.

Although the relatively small sample size does not allow for broad generalizations, through the study we provide valuable comparative insights into shared regional patterns. We conceptualize communication with older adults as a matter of

institutional choice and strategic adaptation in ageing societies and provide a basis for creating institutional communication strategies and practices that recognize, support, and further develop older adults' active participation in socio-cultural life.

Keywords

Cultural engagement, Cultural participation, Communication strategies, National cultural institutions, Older audiences

AGC01 Navigating Platformization: Everyday Digital Practices, Aging Bodies, and Institutional Interfaces

PP 0507 Reclaiming agency in shifting grounds: Femtech, menopause, and the platformization of aging bodies

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As global populations age and healthcare increasingly migrates to digital platforms, the intersection of femtech, aging, and digital citizenship has emerged as a critical site for human-computer interaction research and design innovation. This paper examines how neoliberal logics of self-optimization embedded within femtech technologies constrain and enable agency among older women, particularly focusing on menopause management technologies as a lens through which to explore broader questions of accessibility, literacy, and citizenship rights in the digital age.

Drawing on the conference theme of platformization and digital inequalities, this study analyzes how femtech applications frame menopause not as a natural life transition, but as a "complication" requiring technological intervention. We argue that these technologies create a "FEM-TRAP": the promise of agency via self-tracking paradoxically subjects older women to heightened data exploitation and the erosion of privacy. This dynamic is particularly acute for aging women facing intersectional pressures, including digital literacy gaps and socioeconomic vulnerabilities that make them susceptible to algorithmic discrimination and identity risks.

Methodologically, we present findings from a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the UI/UX, privacy policies, and marketing rhetoric of leading menopause-focused applications. We map how the "biopolitics of the self" are embedded in these interfaces, transforming intimate embodied experiences into extractable resources for profit. Theoretically, we challenge simplistic HCI definitions of agency as "user choice." Instead, drawing on Saba Mahmood's concept of situated agency, we examine how older women's actions are enabled and constrained within the technology's scripts.

This research contributes to HCI scholarship on aging, health technology, and digital equity by proposing an agency-centered framework that acknowledges how neoliberal structures constrain empowerment while identifying spaces for resistance and transformation. As digital health becomes increasingly essential to healthcare access, ensuring that aging women can reclaim agency as informed, protected, and empowered digital citizens—rather than surveilled consumer-subjects—represents both a design imperative and a matter of social justice. Only through feminist methodologies that center older women's voices, experiences, and collective power can we design technologies that genuinely support health across the lifespan rather than extracting profit from life transitions.

Ultimately, we propose an agency-centered framework that moves beyond the user as a surveilled consumer-subject, advocating for feminist design methodologies that support aging women as informed, empowered digital citizens capable of shaping inclusive media futures.

AGC01 Navigating Platformization: Everyday Digital Practices, Aging Bodies, and Institutional Interfaces

PP 0508 Older adults in an interface-first welfare state: Evaluating usability, comprehensibility, and security through vignette experiments

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In Sweden, the government has implemented a strategy referred to as 'Digital First'. This policy stipulates that interactions between citizens and public authorities should primarily occur through digital platforms and channels, rather than through traditional means such as telephone, postal correspondence, or in-person visits.

The strategy is not unique to Sweden; consequently, an increasing number of researchers have begun to highlight what they refer to as the "digital welfare state" (van Toorn et al 2024), or the "interface-first welfare state" (Bennett & Meers 2025).

This transformation cannot be reduced to a mere technological shift. Based on what we know about digital divides (van Dijk, 2020) and citizens' varying degress of access, usage, and willingness to engage with digital media, it is reasonable to assume that equality in public service provision is at risk—a concern that has also been empirically demonstrated (cf. Olsson & Viscovi, 2023).

The present study, which forms part of the project *Digital by Default? Older Adult Citizens and Digital Welfare Interfaces*, employs vignette experiments to examine older individuals' (65+), with varying degrees of digital literacy, perception and evaluation of welfare interfaces.

To what degree do users regard the interfaces as enhancing or impeding communication? Are digital platforms viewed as safe? Do users demonstrate a preference for conventional channels, including telephone or physical appointments?

More specifically, attention is given to two platforms—1177.se (healthcare) and Pensionsmyndigheten.se (pensions and benefits)—as well as BankID (electronic identification), which constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for many welfare services in Sweden. Through the vignettes, channel preferences, usability, comprehensibility, and perceived security are tested.

The vignette experiments represent the final step out of four in a sequential exploratory mixed-methods approach (Cabrera, 2011; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Both the vignettes and the experimental design are informed by our previous sub studies including discourse analysis of welfare interfaces, ethnographic interviews with older adult users (and non-users) as well as reception analysis of specifically relevant welfare interfaces.

The paper adds to the scant empirical research about the consequences that the digitalization of welfare services has for older adults.

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AGC02 Paths to Connection: Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Communication, AI and Caregiving

PP 0940 It's never too late to be green: Ageing and sustainable behaviour awareness

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The analysis of the 2030 Agenda goals and policies reveals that older segments of the population are considered to be at greater "risk" from the outcomes of unsustainability—social, economic, and environmental. For example, individuals belonging to the so-called "fourth age" are likely to be among the first victims of climate change: negative health effects resulting from extreme temperatures, the spread of new diseases, water scarcity, and reduced mobility in the event of emergencies caused by adverse weather events tend to be more severe. At the same time, individuals over the age of 65 have a considerable impact on sustainability processes. This is due, on the one hand, to their growing numerical significance—and thus the increasing societal impact of their actions—and, on the other hand, to behaviors and conditions typical of this age group (e.g. mobility predominantly oriented toward private car use), together with a particular perception of the future shaped by their life-course position, all of which can significantly influence sustainability outcomes.

Despite demographic aging affecting many nations, only recently has attention been paid to what older adults think about sustainability. The inclusion of older people in the sustainability agenda at multiple levels—public debate, academia, and policymaking—is therefore necessary to effectively address climate change.

In this presentation, we examine the relationship between environmental sustainability and population aging, focusing on older generations' perceptions of environmental sustainability and ethical consumption practices. The analysis draws on data from a questionnaire administered in 2025 to a representative sample of the Italian population aged 65–84 (N ≈ 6,000).

The questionnaire includes a validated set of items known as The SustainABLE-16 Questionnaire, designed to measure how older people conceptualize environmental sustainability. The results of this scale have been related to other sections of the questionnaire concerning socio-demographic characteristics, family configuration, housing conditions, social capital, health status, economic situation, intergenerational solidarity, and civic engagement. In particular, we analyze how different patterns of media consumption influence the adoption of ecologically sustainable behaviors.

The main findings show that the sustainability index increases with higher levels of cultural capital, greater access to technological resources, and regular information consumption, both through traditional media such as television and radio and through digital channels. With regard to economic conditions, a positive gradient is also observed; however, its impact appears less pronounced than that of behavioral factors. Economic resources thus emerge as enabling conditions rather than as exclusive determinants of older adults' pro-environmental actions.

Finally, drawing on the knowledge gained, the research aims to: (i) counteract forms of ageism and discrimination implicitly embedded in environmental sustainability policies by avoiding an emphasis on the presumed faults of older generations compared to younger ones—an approach that tends to frame environmental messages as accusatory and thus leads to their rejection; (ii) prevent the exclusion of older generations from initiatives aimed at raising awareness of ethical and sustainable consumption practices, as if they were "structurally" incapable of envisioning a role oriented toward the future.

AGC02 Paths to Connection: Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Communication, AI and Caregiving

PP 0941 Age-attuned and situated: Older peer tutors as digital caregivers

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Age-attuned and situated approaches to digital support are central to how older adults learn and appropriate new digital technologies. Within this field, peer tutors occupy a unique and underexplored position, offering guidance that blends technical assistance with non-formal practices of digital caregiving. Peer tutors help peers of a similar age to complete digital activities of daily living, thereby occupying a role that parallels caregiving by enabling everyday functioning in increasingly digitalized society. In this article, we ask: In what ways do older peer tutors perform digital caregiving when supporting others in learning digital skills? The dataset consists of 21 semi-structured interviews conducted in Central Finland in March 2022 with peer tutors aged between 63 and 84. Many interviewees had developed substantial digital expertise during their former working lives and now provided individualized, voluntary guidance to peers in community-based settings. Using inductive thematic analysis, the study identifies how peer tutors tailor their support to the learning rhythms, emotional states, and everyday life situations of older adults. Rather than emphasizing efficiency or mastery, tutors foreground patience, repetition, trust, and shared generational experience. The findings show that peer tutoring frequently extends beyond technical instruction to include emotional care work, reassurance, and confidence-building. Tutors actively create safe and non-judgmental learning environments in which older adults can engage with digital technologies without fear of failure or stigma. By reconceptualizing peer tutoring as a form of digital caregiving, this study highlights the relational, affective, and situated dimensions of digital support in later life. In doing so, it challenges dominant, skill-centered models of digital support that overlook care practices and social relations. The article argues that peer-led digital support constitutes an important yet underrecognized contribution to digital caregiving practices, inclusion, and well-being in later life, with implications for the design of age-inclusive digital support initiatives and policies.

AGC02 Paths to Connection: Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Communication, AI and Caregiving

PP 0942 Grandparenting in the age of digital platforms

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Modern family lives are increasingly shaped by digital platforms (Sefton-Green et al., 2025). Through the process of platformization, digital platforms' "infrastructures, economic processes and governmental frameworks" (Poell et al., 2019: 1) penetrate family life and reorganizes family practices. In this paper, we examine how grandparents' roles are transformed with digital platforms, including how platforms' business and governance models enable and constrain grandparenting, and how grandparenting as a cultural practice is reorganised through these platforms.

Focusing on grandparenting is important for several reasons. First, in Europe's ageing societies, the role of grandparents is becoming increasingly significant; some scholars even describe the current period as a "golden age" of grandparenting (Miller and Garvey, 2022). This reflects not only the increasing longevity of relationships with grandchildren, but also the capacity of grandparenting to reconfigure other family relationships. Second, present-day grandparents grew up in media landscapes that differ significantly from those of their grandchildren (cf. Bolin, 2016). Moreover, research on older adults, digital platforms, and family life has largely focused on older people's adaptation to digital environments and the role of younger family members as *warm experts* (Taipale, 2019). By contrast, broader dynamics of multigenerational family life in the platform age remain underexplored: though existing research indicate that platform use can strengthen family bonds for the grandparent generation (Siibak & Tamme, 2013), a recent review found that only few studies addresses relationships between children and grandparents (Erstad et al., 2024).

Our analysis draws on interviews with children/youth, parents, and grandparents from 19 families in Norway (55 participants) and 11 families in Poland (33 participants), conducted between 2023 and 2025. We examine cross-cultural similarities and differences in digital grandparenting in Norway and Poland, as well as whether family members' understandings of grandparenting align with or conflict with platform logics. The study encompasses a range of platforms, such as communication, gaming, streaming, educational, and parental control platforms.

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AGC02 Paths to Connection: Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Communication, AI and Caregiving

PP 0943 Shifting grounds of dementia care: Communication, culture, and relational well-being among UK South Asian informal carers

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Background

As European societies confront demographic ageing alongside increasing cultural diversity, dementia care is unfolding on shifting social and communicative grounds. For UK South Asian informal carers, well-being is not an individualised psychological state but a relational and culturally mediated process, shaped through everyday communication within families, communities, and care infrastructures. However, dominant dementia services and psychosocial interventions frequently rely on universalist assumptions that overlook how cultural norms, migration histories, and structural inequities shape carers' experiences, meanings, and help-seeking pathways. Responding to the ECC 2026 theme of "Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures", this paper examines how carers communicatively construct well-being and how Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations operate as cultural intermediaries within dementia care ecologies.

Methods

The study adopts a qualitative, multi-site ethnographic design based in the West Midlands, a region characterised by long-established South Asian communities and diverse voluntary sector provision. Data collection involves 15–20 South Asian informal dementia carers and 15–20 VCFSE staff, using participant observation, in-depth semi-structured interviews, and photo-elicitation. Visual and narrative methods are employed to capture embodied, affective, and relational dimensions of care that are often difficult to articulate through conventional interview techniques alone. Analysis will combine reflexive thematic analysis with interpretive visual analysis to examine three interconnected domains: (1) culturally situated conceptualisations of carer well-being; (2) the dual role of cultural values, such as honour, duty, gendered expectations, and stigma, as both psychosocial resources and constraints; and (3) the communicative role of VCFSE organisations in mediating trust, access, and identity in relation to dementia support.

Anticipated analytical focus

While data collection will be completed by the time of conference presentation, preliminary field engagement suggests that carers' well-being is negotiated through ongoing communicative practices across household, community, and institutional settings. The analysis will explore how traditional caring norms are being reinterpreted across generations, how silence and disclosure around dementia are managed, and how VCFSE spaces function as sites of connection that may both mitigate stigma and reconfigure caring identities. Particular attention is given to how structural conditions like language barriers, institutional mistrust, and resource precarity, shape communicative pathways to support.

Contribution

The paper contributes to health communication scholarship by conceptualising dementia caring well-being as culturally and structurally embedded communicative work, rather than an individual outcome. It advances ECC 2026's focus on "paths" (how carers navigate support), "connections" (how community organisations bridge divides), and "futures" (how culturally responsive dementia care can be co-produced). The findings will inform equitable, community-led approaches to dementia support in increasingly multicultural societies.

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AGC02 Paths to Connection: Civic Engagement, Intergenerational Communication, AI and Caregiving

PP 0944 Bridging the grey–digital divide: Older adults' transcultural engagement with artificial intelligence

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Population ageing is one of the defining transformations of the twenty-first century. At the same time, rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping communication practices, social interactions and everyday life. Yet these two major forces—demographic ageing and AI-driven technological change—often evolve on parallel tracks, leaving older adults insufficiently integrated into emerging AI-mediated environments. This distance not only reinforces digital inequalities but also limits opportunities for autonomy, participation and active ageing.

This qualitative and transcultural study explores how older adults engage with, perceive and relate to AI across different sociocultural contexts. Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, the research draws on nine Focus Groups conducted in Portugal, Spain and the United States of America, involving participants aged 65–75, from diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds and all active internet users. This design enables the identification of shared meanings as well as culturally embedded distinctions in how seniors approach, understand and negotiate AI in their everyday lives.

The analysis compares behaviours, expectations and relational orientations toward AI, identifying both convergences and culturally specific dynamics. Preliminary findings reveal ambivalent attitudes combining curiosity, utility-oriented pragmatism and concerns about control, privacy, surveillance and dehumanisation. While many participants recognise the functional benefits of AI-enabled tools in domains such as health, security and convenience, they also express uncertainty regarding opaque decision-making processes and the potential erosion of human contact. Across contexts, participants negotiate AI through experiential frames shaped by trust, familiarity and perceived personal relevance, often drawing on previous encounters with digital technologies to make sense of more complex intelligent systems.

By illuminating how ageing populations make meaning of and interact with AI, this study contributes to the ongoing debate on communication, ageing and digital inclusion. It offers evidence on how seniors can be more effectively engaged and empowered within increasingly intelligent communication ecosystems. More broadly, the findings highlight the need for inclusive approaches to AI design, media literacy and policy development that recognise older adults not only as users with specific vulnerabilities but also as active interpreters capable of shaping their own technological experiences.

This research was funded by IDICA-IPL and the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology.

CAS01 Mediated Visibility of Women's Sport

PP 0611 About media, fans, finances and abuse: The obstacles and prejudices hindering the rise of women's football in Czechia

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The popularity of women's football worldwide has been gradually increasing. For example, more than 623.000 spectators watched the EURO 2025 matches from the stands to set a new record. Just a couple of days before last Christmas, Bayern Munich announced that the women's team would play in their own stadium instead of the training centre. The emancipation of women's football continues, aiming to reach equality in many ways. Among others, the next World Cup (2027) will take place in Brazil at the same stadiums that hosted the men's tournament in 2014. Despite that, the progress of this sports discipline is hampered by various factors, e.g., lack of media coverage and visibility, fans' prejudices, equal pay gap, or hate speech and abuse targeting players and other female professionals in and around the sport (Downward & Muniz, 2025; Gubby & Martin, 2025; Tjønndal et al., 2024).

This study focuses on the particular situation in Czechia, a country in the heart of Europe with a long-term high popularity of football, where the aforementioned tendencies related to women's football are evident, but more modest, given the country's size and economic situation. Through a series of 12 qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2016) with women's football professionals (players, coaches, referees, or journalists), and subsequent thematic analysis, we aim to answer the main research question: What obstacles hinder the faster development of women's football in Czechia?

The main limitations of the development of women's football in Czechia lie both within and outside the sports field. The position of the sports discipline in the eyes of the media is not equal to that of men's football, which may be the reason for moderate acceptance by the part of fans and public. Additionally, this (in)visibility can also lead to a lack of financial resources and marketing opportunities in women's football. However, the further crucial factors affecting the visibility, image and (self-)presentation of the female professionals are the hate speech and abusive behaviour. This study therefore argues that the initiatives against gender-based violence can strengthen the position of women's football (not only) in Czechia and create better conditions for its development.

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CAS01 Mediated Visibility of Women's Sport

PP 0612 Will winter sports begin to rival sexualised summer sports? How leading Austrian and German female and male athletes in winter sports present themselves on social media

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Social media has fundamentally changed self-presentation (Trültzsch-Wijnen 2018). This leads to profound shifts in power between the actors in the sports/media nexus. Those with visibility in mediatized societies, which often applies to athletes, have high potential for discursive power including identity formation (Driessens 2013). Such power is not present automatically (Couldry 2004), but must be negotiated. This interplay of performance, visibility, identification potential and community building is often discussed under the term *celebrity culture* (Robertson-von Trotha 2013). Athletes can influence everyday cultures and represent their own values (Holmes & Redmond, 2006). In sports in particular, these opportunities are reinforced by international marketing strategies, collaborations and sponsorships, commercialisation of lifestyles and growing importance of eSports, with a central role for social media (Giulianotti & Numerato 2017). Female athletes in particular can benefit from self-empowerment, who are often portrayed in the media in a sexualised manner and detached from their professional status (Konjer et al. 2019; Daniels et al. 2021): "Yet, new media does offer women's sports the chance to control their own content" (Bruce, 2013).

At an early stage many athletes have become "sports-pop-stars" (Nieland & Horak 2024). However, many continue to align self-presentation with mass media strategies, focusing on staging their bodies and sexualised representations. In this light, the "Six-Step-Model of Spornofication" by Schaaf and Nieland (2012) recently had to be expanded with stage 7 to include direct marketing on platforms such as OnlyFans; while sexualisation of established sports corresponds to stage 2. Though,

these developments have almost exclusively affected athletes in summer sports (Xu 2025), while winter sports followed own rules (Sinner et al., 2019; Nieland, 2019). There the proportion of sexualised motifs in athletes' self-presentation declined steadily (Xie et al. 2024; Schibblock et al. 2022) and was barely detectable among leading winter athletes from Austria and Germany (Trültzsch-Wijnen & Weber 2019; XXX, 2023). But media worlds are changing. Against this backdrop, the proposed presentation focusses on the following RQs, related to gender aspects:

- Which social media platforms do leading Austrian and German winter athletes use?
- Which kind of photos/videos are presented?

The respective sample consists of Austrian and German medal winners of the Milano-Cortina 2026 Olympics, 60 athletes are expected. This makes results comparable to own previous studies in 2010, 2018 and 2022 and offers a longitudinal perspective. Profiles are determined by web-screening (Plum 2010) and examined using qualitative content-analysis (Welker et al. 2015) combined with qualitative photograph-analysis (Astheimer 2016). Preliminary data indicate fundamental changes to previous results. Athlete's media repertoires changed, as the number of social media has increased. In addition, qualitative changes in used channels and published contents are expected: In contrast to previous surveys, promising medal contenders are represented on OnlyFans: German Olympic gold medallist bobsledder (2018) Lisa Buckwitz performs there since 11/2024. And Georg Fleischhauer, a favourite in bobsleigh, became the first male German winter athlete to make his OnlyFans profile public in 12/2025. Since Instagram, TikTok and X in particular are used as advertising measures for paid OnlyFans-accounts, changes to content are likely on these platforms, too.

CAS01 Mediated Visibility of Women's Sport

PP 0613 Breaking the net: How Turkish women's volleyball builds power through YouTube networks

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Previous research has consistently shown that mainstream sports media is dominated by football and male-centered content, leaving female athletes structurally disadvantaged in both coverage frequency and content framing. Sports such as volleyball, often gender-typed as women's sports, have historically received limited visibility within traditional media environments. However, despite its marginalization in mainstream sports media compared to football, volleyball has gained substantial visibility and audience engagement in digital media spaces, particularly on YouTube. As YouTube has become one of the most influential platforms for sports content consumption, the public representation of volleyball is increasingly shaped through digital networks that compensate for the visibility constraints imposed by traditional media. Within this digital media environment, women's indoor volleyball holds a distinctive position. In Türkiye, women's volleyball experienced a remarkable increase in media visibility and public interest throughout 2023, a year marked by major international successes of the Turkish Women's National Team, including victories in the FIVB Volleyball Nations League and the CEV EuroVolley championship. Beyond these tournament achievements, 2023 also encompassed the domestic league season as well as periods of routine content production, allowing volleyball-related narratives to circulate continuously across clubs, federations, and sports media channels. This sustained visibility contributed to the consolidation of women's volleyball as a prominent component of the national sports agenda. Among digital platforms, YouTube plays a central role in circulating sports content and shaping audience engagement. This study aims to analyze the relational dynamics among volleyball-related YouTube channels using Social Network Analysis (SNA). Specifically, it investigates which channels influence one another, which reach the widest audiences, and which channels most effectively accelerate the diffusion of volleyball-related information and content within the network. The analysis covers the period between January 1 and December 31, 2023 and includes the official YouTube channels of the top four clubs in the Turkish Women's Volleyball League—VakıfBank, Eczacıbaşı, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray—as well as the official channel of the Turkish Volleyball Federation. In addition, sports media channels operating in Türkiye, including TRT Spor Yıldız, Socrates Dergi, 4Bir4Bir, and Maçkolik, are incorporated into the analysis. These media channels were selected based on quantitative visibility criteria, specifically channels with more than 200,000 subscribers. The sample includes sports media channels that are not exclusively volleyball-oriented but regularly produce volleyball-related content; only volleyball-related videos from these channels are included in the analysis. By focusing on highly visible and influential nodes, the study captures the primary actors through which volleyball-related information is produced, circulated, and amplified within the digital network. The study is theoretically grounded in three communication frameworks. The gatekeeping approach examines how information is filtered and controlled by dominant channels within the network. The two-step flow model identifies opinion-leading channels that exert influence over audiences, while the diffusion of innovations theory explains the speed and patterns of content dissemination across the network. This integrated framework enables analysis of digital influence and visibility. This research represents a rare case of a historically marginalized, gendered sport with substantial digital visibility and offers a methodological model applicable to other marginalized sports.

CAS01 Mediated Visibility of Women's Sport

PP 0614 Women coaches' communicative agency and its role in defining success within gendered sport environments

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Communication and social interaction are integral to sports coaching, and the ability to foster care and trust through interaction is fundamentally linked to coaching success (Lara-Bercial & Mallett, 2016). Social interaction is context-dependent, meaning that coaching situations are constructed by the actors involved while simultaneously shaped by surrounding social expectations and norms (Ronglan, 2010). Women coaches are often expected to adopt athlete-centred approaches emphasising emotional support, dialogue, and relational trust, yet such practices remain undervalued in male-dominated environments (Porter et al., 2025; Schull & Kihl, 2019). Discrimination also extends to the structural level, as limited opportunities, poorer working conditions, and persistent questioning of competence have been experienced by women coaches across different sports and at all stages of their careers (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012; Norman & Rankin-Wright, 2018).

This study examines how women coaches' communicative agency within socially embedded sporting structures relates to success. Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with women coaches aged 20–59 at international competitive levels across 12 sports. An interactive elicitation tool was employed to capture coaches' definitions of success and self-assessment against these criteria. The study addressed the following research questions: (1) To what extent do female coaches view communication skills as predictive of success? (2) What aspects constitute successful interpersonal communication? (3) How do gendered dynamics influence these perceptions?

Preliminary findings indicate that intra- and interpersonal communication skills, athlete-centred approaches, and coaching ambition are prioritised as markers of success by women coaches. Communication is described as fostering respect and autonomy, reframing coaching as an educational and ethical activity rather than a purely competitive enterprise. However, such approaches are reported as marginalised within male-dominated networks, requiring continual justification. Structural barriers, including lack of networks, job insecurity, and gendered recruitment, are identified as compounding these challenges.

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CAS01 Mediated Visibility of Women's Sport

PP 0615 From ads to 'organic' hype: Sports betting promotion in algorithmically curated feeds

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The societal role of sports is increasingly intertwined with the gambling industry. This phenomenon can be described as 'gamblification', where betting becomes a normalized component of the sports experience (Hing et al., 2023; Lopez-Gonzalez & Griffiths, 2018; Macey & Hamari, 2024). While previous research has focused on traditional media or Twitter, the visual and algorithmic nature of newer platforms like TikTok and Instagram remains under-explored, particularly regarding how they target young adults (Pitt et al., 2024; Rossi & Nairn, 2022). More specifically, research shows that young men are more likely to bet on sports (DiCicco-Bloom & Romer, 2012; Kape et al., 2023; O'Loughlin & Blaszczynski, 2018). This study addresses this gap by examining the form and content of sports gambling material exposed to male youth, highlighting how 'new communicators', such as influencers and meme accounts, disrupt established advertising structures.

To capture the algorithmically curated experience of young users, this study conducted a qualitative content analysis using six simulated user profiles on smartphones set to factory settings. All profiles were configured as 18-year-old males and

were systematically varied in their levels of 'internal' (platform-based) and 'external' (search-based) interest and interaction, in order to emulate different algorithmic feedback loops. Over a three-week period in November 2025, all sports gambling-related content surfaced to these profiles was collected and analyzed.

The findings show that sports betting content on TikTok and Instagram is dominated by 'organic' posts from influencers and fan accounts rather than overt corporate advertising, frequently blurring the boundary between entertainment and promotion. Here, 'organic' refers to content that is not presented as formal advertising (e.g., produced by influencers or fan accounts), yet can still operate as promotional messaging and may involve undisclosed commercial ties. A prominent strategy is the use of humor, particularly self-deprecating jokes about financial loss, which downplays the potential harms of gambling and frames betting as a socially acceptable, shared experience.

The content environment is also strongly gendered. It is heavily masculinized, portraying men as knowledgeable experts and risk-takers, while women are largely absent or positioned as passive spectators. In parallel, the study identifies deliberate alignment with youth culture through slang, trending audio, and meme formats. While both platforms share these features, they diverge in style: content on TikTok more often trivializes gambling through challenges and comedic framing, whereas content on Instagram emphasizes stylized 'highlight reels' and aesthetic edits that glamorize betting.

Taken together, these results suggest that contemporary sports communication operates within an algorithmic ecosystem that normalizes gambling for young audiences through peer-like influence and humorous framing. This raises challenges for media literacy and regulation, especially in relation to hidden advertising practices and the broader 'gamblification' of sports consumption among vulnerable groups.

CAS02 (New) Players in Digital Sports Media Landscapes

PP 0935 Esports, politics, communication and Olympic sportswashing - the IOC's flirtation with Saudi Arabia

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The introduction and premature termination of the Olympic Esports Games in Saudi Arabia illustrates a mix of politics, communication, and future developments for sports federations and the sport itself (Dubinsky, 2023). Compared to traditional sports, esports exhibits distinctive features: The development of computer games into a competitive sport has been shaped from the outset by digitalization, internationalization, a young audience, and specific marketing characteristics (Yuan, 2024). This sport offers an opportunity for the development of sports federations (Thieme & Wojciechowski, 2021). The research question arises: What factors led to the start of the Olympic Esports Games and to the termination of the relationship between the IOC and Saudi Arabia?

Olympic sports have been engaging with esports for several years now (Jenny et al., 2025). Saudi Arabia's commitment to sports, and esports in particular, is based on a state plan for investments in sports, which is financed by the State Investment Fund (PIF) (Saudi Arabia, 2025; Saudi Vision 2030). In July 2024, the IOC awarded the Olympic Esports Games to Saudi Arabia for twelve years. The start of the Games was postponed to 2027 (IOC 2024; 2025a) and then cancelled in 2025 (IOC, 2025b).

Sports federations, as meta-organizations, exist in special relationships and develop dynamics in terms of structure, personnel, and finances (Thieme, 2024). Understanding the IOC as a company, the 7-S model can be used to analyze these dynamics. This model identifies organizations as entities influenced by hard factors such as strategy, structures, and systems, as well as soft factors such as skills, staff, style/culture, and historical conditions like shared values/superordinate goals (Hayes, 2014; Waterman et al., 1980). This presentation will analyze the relationship between the IOC and Saudi Arabia based on these factors.

The investigation into the motives of the IOC for the planned partnership with the National Olympic and Paralympic Committee of Saudi Arabia focuses particularly on the potential aspects of sportswashing (Bergkvist & Skeiseid, 2024; Boykoff, 2022; Boykoff & Mascarenhas, 2016), so the communicative perspective of Saudi Arabia and sportswashing are addressed (Borno & Mokhtar, 2025; Chadwick & Widdop, 2022; 2023). Therefore, a second aspect of the research question is: What significance did the flirtation of the Olympic Esports Games in Saudi Arabia by the IOC have with regard to sportswashing?

Methodologically, four in-depth interviews with stakeholders and experts in this field were conducted before cancellation in 2025. Four further in-depth interviews are planned for 2026 to explore the significance of the 7-S-factors. The interviews were analyzed using software-assisted content analysis.

The results demonstrate a classification or assessment of possible sportswashing in Saudi Arabia through esports and the Olympic Games based on the facts and varies greatly depending on the perspective. Some significant characteristics and categories of advantages and disadvantages of this development can be identified. The categories mentioned can be subsumed as Economy, Partnerships, Politics, Social structures, Image and Values (Ettinger, 2023; Grix & Brannagan, 2024; Kaspar, 2022; Skey, 2022). In summary, the perspectives are crucial for a designation or assessment as Olympic gamewashing.

CAS02 (New) Players in Digital Sports Media Landscapes

PP 0936 Between authenticity and spectacle. Red Bull and the visual transformation of winter sport

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This paper is part of an ongoing project examining visual sports culture through selected sports films and series about ski and motorsport athletes. The project adopts a media- and cultural-sociological perspective and investigates how sport and national identity are represented in fictional and documentary formats. On the one hand, the theoretical framework combines approaches from Cultural Studies and film sociology (Winter 1992; Niederer & Winter 2008; Geimer, Heinze & Winter 2021), which conceptualize films as expressions of societal values, conflicts, and collective imaginaries. On the other hand, perspectives of sport communication research are used to address processes of mediatization, globalization, and commercialization (Author 2019a; Frandsen 2020). Methodologically, the analysis combines qualitative content analysis with visual discourse analysis.

Building on this framework, the paper examines Red Bull's engagement in media sports in Austria, focusing on the phenomenon described as the "Red Bullization" of sport (Author et. al. 2025). This concept refers to the ways in which Red Bull reshapes sport through extensive sponsorship, media production, and marketing strategies, transforming athletic performance into spectacle, commodifying risk, and producing globalized visual narratives that extend beyond traditional competition and sports reporting. Red Bull thus emerges as a central cultural producer within contemporary visual sports culture (Author 2019b).

To structure the field, this presentation builds upon the following selected case studies, which offer insights in different aspects of Red Bull's multitude media approaches. Gerald Salmina's *Streif – One Hell of a Ride* portrays the legendary Hahnenkamm downhill race in Kitzbühel. Following five athletes over several months of preparation and competition, the film foregrounds extreme athletic performance and its dangers, framed by retrospective sequences with prominent figures. The documentary exemplifies how brand-driven production and documentary storytelling contribute to the Red Bullization of winter sport by aestheticizing both the racecourse and the alpine landscape while creating immersive and emotionally charged viewing experiences.

A second focus lies on Red Bull's winter extreme sports videos, which negotiate the tension between authenticity, understood as scene credibility, and commercialization through sponsorship. From a film-sociological perspective, these productions can be interpreted through the concept of the cinema of attractions (Gunning 1990), emphasizing spectacle, speed, and immersive imagery to engage audiences while reinforcing brand visibility and transforming local sporting practices into transnational entertainment.

Another important site of Red Bull's visual sports production is the series *Winter Heroes* on Red Bull TV, which presents episodic portraits of predominantly Austrian ski stars. By focusing on personal biographies, training routines, and individual narratives, the series extends athletes' visibility beyond competition and fosters emotional connections between viewers and athletes. In doing so, *Winter Heroes* contributes to the broader Red Bullization of winter sport by integrating personal storytelling, national references, and globalized media aesthetics.

The analysis is further informed by Barthes' (1977) concepts of mythos and Bourdieu's (1993) notion of cultural capital. Overall, our work contributes to debates on commercialization, mediatization, and visual culture in sport by showing how Red Bullization produces narratives, images, and emotional experiences that reshape the presentation and perception of sport in the digital age.

CAS02 (New) Players in Digital Sports Media Landscapes

PP 0937 Serving Gen Z: A qualitative exploration of how quality demands and financial pressures redefine local sports journalists' professional identity

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Journalism reflects and shapes societal developments while responding sensitively to technological, economic, and cultural change (Kramp & Loosen, 2018). These dynamics are particularly visible in local journalism, where resource scarcity, shifting media consumption, and platform dominance weaken regional reporting and threaten democratic participation (Neff & Pickard, 2023; Heiselberg & Hopmann, 2024). Economic constraints coincide with a structural redefinition of professional identity: the pressure to reconcile journalistic quality with financial viability transforms newsroom routines and challenges traditional notions of "good journalism" (Schmidt et al., 2022).

Local sports serve as an exemplary lens for this transformation. As a social space fostering integration and identification, local sports reporting mediates between media, clubs, and audiences (Schaffrath, 2021). Yet it is highly exposed to economic pressures: newsrooms must produce more content with fewer resources while developing digital formats for younger

audiences to maintain relevance (Jonscher, 2024; Newman et al., 2025). For journalists in training, these tensions raise fundamental questions about how professional identity and quality are negotiated under changing conditions.

Grounded in journalistic roles (Hanitzsch & Vos, 2016), this study conceptualizes journalistic practice as an interplay between normative ideals- such as objectivity and social responsibility- and their situational enactment. Current research indicates increasing flexibility in role perceptions, shaped by audience logics, platform constraints, and technological innovation (Riedl & Hanitzsch, 2025). In local contexts, journalists simultaneously act as community members, information brokers, and economically dependent actors- a multi-layered role that generates conflicts but also new opportunities for proximity and participation (Nagel & Broersma, 2024). Quality discourses further complicate this picture: traditional criteria like relevance and diversity are under strain, while process-oriented dimensions such as transparency and dialogic engagement gain importance in algorithmically mediated environments (Wilczek et al., 2024).

The study employs a qualitative, exploratory design to capture meaning-making processes among local journalists. We conducted eight semi-structured interviews across diverse organizational settings, selected along contrast dimensions: carrier/financing (public-service, private, non-profit), status (newsroom, freelance/digital), and distribution channel (print, online, audio/podcast, social/video). These were complemented by 15 Generation Z audience interviews. Using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015), the research contrasts professional and audience perspectives to illuminate shifts in role conceptions, quality standards, and strategies for addressing younger publics.

Findings indicate a persistent normative core (informing, contextualizing, local relevance) that is increasingly reorganized through resource scarcity and metric-driven routines; quality is negotiated as a situational trade-off between journalistic standards and measurable reach, retention, and conversion. Strategies to address younger publics focus on platform-native formats, personalization, and interaction, while limited time, skills, and institutional resources set clear boundaries for innovation.

By focusing on local sports within the broader news ecosystem, this study contributes to debates on the future of local public spheres and journalistic professionalism under conditions of economic pressure and digital acceleration.

CAS02 (New) Players in Digital Sports Media Landscapes

PP 0938 Soft 'power play' at the 2026 FIFA World Cup: Towards a theoretical framework for understanding sport, politics, and mediatized audiences

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Sports mega-events (SMEs) have continuously grown in significance as cultural, economic, political and media phenomena since the early twentieth century. While governing bodies often promote these events as 'apolitical' platforms fostering global unity (Meeuwsen & Kreft 2023), a framing frequently echoed in media coverage, SMEs are regularly connected to national conflicts, identity politics, and (geo)political rivalries (Wolfe 2025). In this context, this paper introduces a theoretical framework that examines the intersection of sports, politics, and media, using preliminary insights from fieldwork surrounding audience experiences of the 2026 FIFA World Cup as a case study.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is co-hosted by the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The bid, *United as One* (2018), articulated visions of harmony and peace through football and sought to counter Donald Trump's divisive discourse (Beissel & Andrews 2021). However, the event has also become a tool for the US President's geopolitical 'power plays' and authoritarian populism, while Canada and Mexico contend with threats to sovereignty and economic challenges from their dominant co-host. This paper explores how (geo)political instability and tension around the World Cup shape media audience experiences in Canada and Mexico, the two smaller players in the bid which have distinct political, media, and sports systems. The paper asks: (1) How do media frame collective identities and national discourses amid political conflicts in SMEs? (2) How do audience perceptions of media, politicization, and identity formation vary based on historical, political, and media-specific contexts?

Theoretically, the paper integrates interdisciplinary insights from sports diplomacy (Grix & Brannagan 2024), emotion-driven politics (Hansen 2022), mediatization (Frandsen 2020), and media systems theory (Hepp & Couldry 2010), to analyse mediatized political tensions in SMEs. Preliminary findings from a qualitative research design combining media framing analysis and fieldwork—including focus groups with 3 natural groups in each country, in-depth interviews, and data donation—with Canadian and Mexican media audiences during the FIFA World Cup in June-July 2026 will aid in testing and illustrating the framework to be developed for the conference presentation.

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CAS02 (New) Players in Digital Sports Media Landscapes

PP 0939 Athletes' assessment of institutional support structures in response to (potential) online hate

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In digital media environments, athletes—just as other social stakeholders—increasingly face online hate (Kearns et al., 2023). This potentially harms their mental health and may even lead to their withdrawal from public arenas (McCarthy, 2022). While grounds are shifting since media visibility becomes more and more risky in increasingly hostile digital media environments, organized support structures may have the potential to positively influence athletes' experiences. However, for other professional groups, such as journalists, it has been noted that those affected by digital violence are usually left to cope on their own (Holton et al., 2023).

Sports organizations appear to have recognized the problem and are addressing it with various measures—from workshops (e.g., DFL, 2024) to legal action (e.g., FIFA, 2023) and AI-based filters (DOSB, 2024). However, current research criticizes these approaches as reactive and insufficient, especially with regard to gender-specific risks (Hayday et al., 2024; Williams et al., 2025). In that connection, the extent to which those measures are appreciated and perceived as helpful by the athletes affected, and whether they would like to see measures that go beyond this, is not yet known.

This raises the following questions:

RQ1: How do athletes rate the existing support against online hate offered by organized sports?
RQ1a: What potential do they particularly attribute to AI measures?
RQ2: What support measures would athletes like to see from organized sports?

To answer these questions, guided interviews were conducted with 29 German elite athletes (18 of whom were female) from various sports (summer and winter sports; individual and team sports) (survey period 11/24–07/25). The interviews lasted an average of 43 minutes, were transcribed automatically, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis in MAXQDA.

Results show that athletes were largely unaware of institutional support (RQ1). Only a minority of interviewees has made use of support services offered by sports organizations. However, they particularly referred to preventive formats that they perceived as valuable to prevent harm particularly from young athletes (RQ2). Strikingly, interviewees did not know about the potential and use of AI measures in order to combat online hate (RQ1a). While they acknowledged potential to AI filters, athletes voiced concerns regarding accuracy and freedom of expression. They highlighted that criticism must remain possible in the future, and censorship must not be allowed.

Overall, the interviews clearly indicate that athletes see themselves as primarily responsible for dealing with online hate. Organized support is welcomed, but is hardly known or accessible. AI is discussed as a possible relief, but its acceptance depends on maintaining an open culture of debate.

EMS01 Moving Images - Moved Audiences: Visual Witnessing During War and Conflict

PP 0265 Moving images, moved audiences? A focus group study into audience interpretations of distant suffering in The Impossible (2012)

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In December 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami struck the coasts of several Asian countries. It resulted in one of the largest natural disasters ever, leading to massive media attention, aid, and solidarity (Moeller, 2006). Most studies have examined how Western audiences witness disasters indirectly through factual media formats such as news, documentaries and social media (Huiberts, 2019; Kyriakidou, 2015). By focusing on *The Impossible* (2012), which tells the story of a British family during the 2004 tsunami, this paper examines the largely unexplored audience responses to and interpretations of mediated distant suffering in fiction films. The latter form important signifiers of social phenomena, including distant suffering, and provide viewers with an emotional experience, as they 'mimic human consciousness' and amplify emotions (Plantinga, 2009: 48). Fiction films create an imagined, experiential overlap through which global audiences not only witness but partially share the suffering of the distant Other, potentially fostering deep emotional involvement (Scott, 2014). Five focus groups (N = 22) in Flanders, the northern Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, were organized to explore audiences' emotional involvement and responses to the human suffering as depicted in the disaster film *The Impossible*. The study explored whether and how fictionalized narratives of real disasters can incite audience emotions and engagement towards distant suffering.

Our findings show that our participants developed empathy for the characters in *The Impossible* by 'domesticating' the fictionalized suffering or relating the story to their own lives. This process rendered the characters' suffering more understandable and emotionally engaging. The Western characters made the suffering more accessible and emotionally impactful for some participants. However, this closeness rarely translated into concrete action. Participants first needed to process their own emotions and were not encouraged to reflect critically on their privileged position. When participants approached the film more rationally and developed sympathy, they maintained 'proper distance' (Silverstone, 2007), enabling reflection on their own position and that of the suffering Other. This is probably the film's greatest strength: its ability to build a connection between the Self and the Other based on common interest, understanding, and reflection.

Some participants' emotional distancing from the film's characters stemmed from factors such as the characters' privileged social class, which they found unrelatable (Kyriakidou, 2015). Geographical and temporal distance further limited engagement: an event that occurred far away or long ago was easily dismissed (Linklater, 2007). Personal taste, viewing habits and awareness of the film medium's affordances also shaped the viewing experience (Vaage, 2023). Participants often evaluated the film through its acting or cinematography. Some criticized the dramatization, while others found that the claim of being based on true events actually increased authenticity and emotional impact. The Eurocentric framing was mostly acknowledged only when raised by the moderator, prompting a reconsideration of their viewing experience. Some criticized the marginalization of the local population, while others defended the focus on the family's personal struggle. In general, underlying themes of socio-cultural polarisation or geopolitical power imbalances fuelling the stereotypical representations of Self and Other remained largely absent.

EMS01 Moving Images - Moved Audiences: Visual Witnessing During War and Conflict

PP 0266 Mass destruction through mass distraction: How TikTok videos by Israeli soldiers aestheticize war into entertainment during war in Gaza after October 7, 2023

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This paper presents a visual and semiotic analysis of TikTok videos produced by male and female Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attack. Drawing on a curated corpus of five short-form videos, the study incorporates screenshots of key scenes to illustrate recurring visual patterns and aesthetic strategies. Particular attention is given to gestures, framing, sound, captions, and performative elements through which violence, military presence, and civilian space are reconfigured for entertainment. The analysis demonstrates how the conflict is repeatedly rendered lighthearted, aestheticized, and ironic—stripped of emotional, political, and moral gravity, and detached from the lived realities of Palestinian suffering.

While the entanglement of militarism and entertainment is not new, TikTok intensifies this logic through its algorithmic structure, trend-driven aesthetics, and emphasis on humor, immediacy, and virality. In doing so, the platform facilitates a platform-specific military–entertainment complex in which ethical boundaries are increasingly blurred and violence becomes visually consumable. The playful performance of soldiers in uniform, combined with comedic timing and stylized imagery, produces an ethically troubling spectacle that normalizes asymmetrical power relations and reframes domination

as humor. These representations raise critical ethical questions not only about the actions depicted, but also about mediated witnessing, responsibility, and complicity within digitally circulated scenes of distant suffering.

Unlike existing scholarship that focuses primarily on political messaging, propaganda, or informational content related to the war in Gaza, this study examines the intersection of social media aesthetics, humor, and ethical desensitization within contemporary digital war culture. The analyzed videos have not previously been examined in such visual and semiotic detail, particularly as content produced by Israeli soldiers themselves—figures who function simultaneously as performers, video makers, and active participants in the conflict. By filming, editing, captioning, and circulating their own performances, the soldiers collapse the distinction between actor and author, embedding military power directly within the visual and affective economy of platform culture. This dual positioning complicates conventional distinctions between documentation, performance, and moral accountability.

The findings support a clear ethical interpretation of these videos. They can be read as performative assertions of military power in which irony and spectacle function to reinforce dominance while minimizing ethical scrutiny. Destroyed homes and abandoned shops in Gaza operate as a mise-en-scène, transforming civilian spaces into theatrical stages designed for TikTok circulation. The systematic absence of victims from the frame facilitates the erasure of suffering and the suspension of empathy, rendering destruction aesthetic, abstract, and consequence-free. At the same time, the videos' circulation to distant audiences reshapes practices of witnessing, further distancing viewers emotionally and weakening affective and moral engagement with mediated suffering. Through humor, repetition, and visual stylization, violence is normalized both within the filmed scene and in spectatorship itself. The videos thus reveal how digital platforms enable mediated suffering performed, framed, and consumed in ways that detach viewers emotionally while reinforcing dominance, creating a digital space where cruelty becomes spectacle.

EMS01 Moving Images - Moved Audiences: Visual Witnessing During War and Conflict

PP 0267 Representing atrocity: Interpreting Ukraine war photojournalism through visual grammar

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This article examines the representational strategies adopted by professional photojournalists documenting the war in Ukraine following Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, with particular attention to how images of violence and suffering construct humanitarian visuality and mediate distant suffering. Drawing on a qualitative thematic, interpretative, and comparative analysis of 88 photographs produced by 10 internationally recognized photojournalists, the study investigates how atrocity photography negotiates ethical witnessing, documentary testimony, and empathetic engagement within contemporary war reporting. Grounded in visual sociology and scholarship on humanitarian and war visuality, the research addresses longstanding critiques of sensationalism, voyeurism, and the spectacularization of pain, asking whether Ukraine war photojournalism reproduces or challenges dominant Euro-American representational traditions.

The analysis identifies six recurring thematic clusters – death, desolation, destruction, blood, rescue, and escape – through which embodied vulnerability and the magnitude of violence are visually articulated. Across these themes, three interconnected interpretative patterns emerge: the centrality of the victim, a strong documentary and historical intent, and a pronounced humanitarian and empathetic potential. Rather than aestheticizing violence or reducing subjects to passive icons of suffering, the photographs largely foreground victims' lived experiences, individuality, and dignity, positioning the body as both evidence of atrocity and a site of moral and political appeal. The images function simultaneously as testimonies of war crimes and as visual calls for justice, recognition, and humanitarian action.

A comparative technical analysis further reveals how compositional and photographic choices – such as proximity, imperfect framing, blurred focus, and sequential shooting – reinforce the testimonial character of the images. These elements signal the photographers' participatory presence and ethical engagement in the field, privileging immediacy and accuracy over aesthetic refinement. The resulting visual narratives resist spectacularization while sustaining the emotional and evidentiary force necessary for public witnessing.

Overall, the findings indicate a shift toward a more dignified and de-victimizing approach to atrocity photography in the context of the Ukraine war. By emphasizing ethical responsibility, documentary rigor, and humanitarian commitment, contemporary war photojournalism appears to reconfigure the visual politics of suffering. The study contributes empirically and theoretically to debates on humanitarian visuality, peace-oriented journalism, and the role of images in promoting justice, historical memory, and social responsibility in times of armed conflict.

EMS01 Moving Images - Moved Audiences: Visual Witnessing During War and Conflict

PP 0268 Visual (mis)information: Strategic doubt and contestation of war images

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Images from warzones are habitually accused of being misinformation. Sometimes, this stems from genuine concern or suspicion. At other times, such accusations arise from the deliberate attempts to discredit images that reveal perceived inconvenient or harmful realities. They function as an *iconoclastic strategy* to delegitimize images that have the potential to go viral, mobilize public opinion, and influence policymaking by documenting war crimes and humanitarian disasters while simultaneously appealing to emotions.

Much attention over the past decade has been devoted in public debate and scholarly literature to misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and the broader crisis of trust (e.g. Bennett and Livingston, 2020; Farkas and Schou, 2020; Altay and Acerbi, 2024). By contrast, research on their visual manifestations remains comparatively scarce. This oversight is likely due to the predominantly text-based orientation of research fields dealing with misinformation. What literature on misinformation tends to overlook is that much communication today is visual, especially on social media, which serves as a major breeding ground for its spread and amplification.

This paper examines how visual evidence is contested in international news media's coverage of the first year of the Gaza War (2023–2024), focusing on images of child victims. Such images have historically held monumental impact on public opinion (e.g. Seu, 2015; Al-Ghazzi, 2019; Adler-Nissen, Andersen and Hansen, 2020; Mollerup and Mortensen, 2020). However, the Gaza War introduced a markedly different scenario: visual (mis)information battles escalated to the point where images of child victims were routinely suspected of being fake, staged, or AI-generated. This not only hindered their circulation but also complicated the public's ability to distinguish between genuine instances of misinformation and strategic accusations designed to neutralize the power of visual evidence.

Drawing on a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative mapping and qualitative textual analysis, the paper develops a typology of visual misinformation. It is based on a data set of news items in a global range of English-language news outlets accessed through Proquest (n = 116). The analysis identifies four types, ordered along a continuum from minimal to maximal manipulation: *associated* (images merely suspected of being misinformation); *imagined* (non-existent images cited as evidence); *recontextualized* (images from earlier conflicts presented as current); and *AI* (deepfakes and other AI-generated images). While existing research has primarily focused on recontextualized and deepfaked imagery, the findings show that the subtler forms—associated and imagined—are more prevalent and play a crucial role in sustaining uncertainty and mistrust.

Across the typology, three broader dynamics emerge. First, uncertainty surrounding visual evidence is frequently framed through classical catch-all phrases such as the "fog of war" (Clausewitz) and "truth is the first casualty of war" (Aeschylus), which obscure rather than clarify the specific mechanisms of visual misinformation. Second, emotions are central: images often "feel true" regardless of their factual status. Third, elites play a pivotal role in amplifying visual misinformation, while journalistic metacoverage may inadvertently erode trust in images more broadly. The paper concludes by arguing for a more fine-grained vocabulary to understand how images are contested and instrumentalized in contemporary warfare.

EMS01 Moving Images - Moved Audiences: Visual Witnessing During War and Conflict

PP 0269 AI witnessing: Humanitarian communication in the age of Artificial Intelligence

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Artificially generated images and videos are challenging traditional understandings of how we document and witness global crises. Although it has long been acknowledged that photographs can be purposefully framed and used to elicit emotional responses, their indexical power to represent and, thus, provide evidence about global events and crises has been central in suspending disbelief and eliciting trust in the truthfulness of the events represented. What is new, however, in the context of generative AI (genAI), is the photorealistic nature of synthetic visuals created by image-generators such as DALL-E, Midjourney or Stable Diffusion. This fictional photorealism introduces new ways of witnessing crises that raise with renewed urgency questions of authenticity and trust in humanitarian communication, in a context where genAI and synthetic media are implicated in broader anxieties about disinformation and manipulation.

This paper presents a theoretical contribution to these debates by introducing the concept of 'AI witnessing'. It does so by building on the concept of media witnessing (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2009), which describes the distinct modality of practices involved in the mediation of human suffering and vulnerability. We suggest 'AI witnessing' an analytical lens that can help us explore the tensions and transformations brought about in the field of humanitarian communication through the use of genAI to represent and document crises. We argue that, by renegotiating the role of presence and authenticity in the representation of suffering subjects, AI witnessing is built on three inter-related tensions. First, it can safeguard the

dignity and safety of victims, on one hand, but also renders their predicament vulnerable to further manipulation and political propaganda, on the other hand. Second, AI witnessing throws into relief the relationship between trust – both in the institutional credibility of humanitarian imagery and the reality of the suffering depicted – and empathy with suffering victims. Finally, AI witnessing poses questions about the authority to authenticate, interpret and regulate AI-generated imagery, as well as the norms, values and power dynamics that such authority maintains or challenges. Ultimately, we argue that AI-generated images challenge conventional understandings of media witnessing by blurring the line between reality and fabrication, demanding a new conceptualisation for humanitarian communication in the digital age and introducing new urgent questions on the mediation of humanitarian crises and suffering.

EMS02 Witnessing at a Distance: Practices, Ethics, and Politics of Mediated Suffering

PP 0377 Distant reporting and the distant suffering of Sudan: A new style of conflict journalism?

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The mediation of distant suffering (Chouliaraki) has long depended on a tripartite negotiation for information access between international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), states, and the news media. In the context of large-scale suffering from civil war in Sudan being rendered nearly invisible globally (Gregory), the authors set out to empirically investigate how current configurations of that relationship are impacting the international story told of Sudan. Through a survey and limited set of interviews with the key actors from the global journalism and humanitarian aid sectors, this paper examines story sourcing practices as deployed in recent coverage of events in Sudan. The development from instigation to publication of recent stories of the civil war are presented as case studies. Sudan's civil war is unprecedented in modern conflict journalism, since access for international journalists to conflict areas is mostly impossible and even INGOs have limited access to conflict and affected populations. This has resulted in a considerable dependence by international journalists on flow of story information from INGO workers. Close collaboration between media and INGOs in covering humanitarian crisis in East Africa is not new (e.g., Franks). However, initial indications in this research suggest new journalism models are emerging in which INGOs' stature and access (though limited) give them unprecedented storytelling and framing agency in ways that blur the boundaries between journalism and INGO communication. Recent scholarship has critiqued East African journalism for over-dependence on foreign news organisations in the coverage of regional stories (Wahutu) and being co-opted into racialised, Western news representation of the continent (Douglas). Within that context, examination of how those foreign stories are constructed takes on added importance. The authors draw from a unique extent of first-hand knowledge and links to relevant actors: Isharaza is a policy advisor with World Vision and author of a major study of INGO communications. Osuri is an experienced East African correspondent for international media, and board chair of the African Foreign Press Association.

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EMS02 Witnessing at a Distance: Practices, Ethics, and Politics of Mediated Suffering

PP 0378 Synthetic witnessing from a distance: The sense-making practices of OSI(NT) activists during the Russian full-scale invasion

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Since the beginning of the russian full-scale invasion against Ukraine, this war has been extensively documented and analysed by the civilian population, both in Ukraine, but also transnationally. These practices, while being often described as "crowd witnessing" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013),"citizen witnessing" (Allan, 2013) or "data witnessing" (Gray, 2019) unites investigative volunteers and lay people together to distribute the "labor of witnessing" (Matviyenko & Larin, 2025) across platforms and networks. As civilians continue to participate in monitoring, collecting and verifying efforts to secure digital evidence, the distinction between civilians and combatants blurs (Ford, 2024). However, existing theories of witnessing assume either physical co-presence or mediated embodied interaction, leaving an insufficient conceptual vocabulary to explain how engagement and accountability operate in data-driven Open Source Investigation/Intelligence (in the following OSI(NT)) practices, despite being geographically distant from the frontline in Ukraine.

The following paper addresses this gap by investigating throug ethnographic inquiry how through the engagement of individual actors of OSI(NT) groups authoritative expertise emerges (cf. Charlton et al., 2024; Cochrane 2022). Therefore, I mobilise Knorr Cetina´s concept of the "synthetic situation" (2009) to reconceptualise OSI(NT) practices during russia´s war against Ukraine as a form of "synthetic witnessing" that is not dependent on physical co-presence and embodied interaction. Knorr

Cetina defines "synthetic situations" as "an environment augmented (and temporalized) by fully or partially scoped components—in which we find ourselves in one another's and the scopic components' response presence, without needing to be in one another's physical presence" (2009, p.69). Building on this, I am applying these features onto OSI(NT) practices to describe them as a form of non-embodied response to the russian full-scale invasion. These data practices entail, first, a shift from physical to "response presence"; second, focussing on scopic engagement mediated through the screen as primary interlocutor instead of human-centred interaction; and third, a shifted focus from narrow, localised perspective towards global information assemblages (Knorr Cetina, 2009, pp. 69ff).

Despite a lack of synchronicity in virtual arrangements, investigative actors can be held "accountable for responding without incoming attention or interaction request" (Knorr Cetina, 2009, 74). Yet, in line with Kotišová and van der Velden's (2023) concept of "affective epistemology", emotional engagement with data produced during the war can function as situated knowledge that further motivates for investigative work.

I further argue that "synthetic witnessing" stimulates new forms of expertise within OSI(NT) practice, even the absence of formalised guidelines and standards (beyond frameworks such as the Berkeley Protocol). While these investigative practices reflect democratic opportunities for participation in intelligence production (Van Puyvelde & Tabárez Rienzi, 2025), ethical ambiguities come up (cf. Dyer & Ivens, 2020), including risks of secondary trauma (Koenig & Lampros, 2023).

EMS02 Witnessing at a Distance: Practices, Ethics, and Politics of Mediated Suffering

PP 0379 Mediating suffering with care: Reimagining journalism ethics through peace journalism and minority representation

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In the early decades of the twenty-first century, journalism faces profound ethical challenges that test its foundational principles and social purpose (Ward, 2019). From threats to editorial independence and press freedom to the pressures of verification, disinformation, growing polarization and the commercial exploitation of attention through algorithmic systems, the question of what constitutes ethical journalism has become increasingly urgent. These challenges are further intensified by polarized debates over identity and social justice, often articulated through "anti-woke" discourses that politicize diversity, equality and inclusion, framing ethical and human-rights concerns as ideological bias rather than as democratic values.

While professional journalism continues to rely on normative principles such as accuracy and commitment to truth, these values alone appear insufficient to address the moral complexity of contemporary communication environments, particularly in the representation of minorities, where suffering is mediated through frames that may reproduce stigma and symbolic violence. In response, scholars (Aslam, 2019; Christians, 2019; Ward, 2019, 2021) increasingly call for ethical frameworks that are more human-centered, context-sensitive and attentive to vulnerability, reflecting a broader shift in media ethics from rule-based approaches toward care-oriented perspectives that foreground empathy, responsibility and moral awareness.

Building on this ethical turn, this paper argues that peace journalism, originally developed as an alternative to war and conflict reporting (Galtung, 1998, 2006), can be reconceptualized as a broader ethical framework for minority representation. It introduces the Peace Model for Ethical and Inclusive Journalism, a framework that operationalizes ethical responsibility through concrete dimensions of representation, including voice, sourcing, framing, problem definition, and language. The model distinguishes between two contrasting ethical orientations: a framework of polarization and stigma, characterized by elite-dominated sourcing, threat and victim frames, depersonalization and stigmatizing language; and a framework of peace and inclusion, which emphasizes pluralism, contextualization, human-centered storytelling and attention to structural inequalities. These orientations reflect competing moral understandings of journalism's responsibility toward those whose suffering is mediated.

Greece offers an instructive case, as its media system has been shaped by prolonged economic crisis, political polarization and intense public debates over migration and LGBTQI+ rights. Empirically, the paper synthesizes findings from quantitative content analyses of 2,345 news articles from Greek national media outlets across different periods, complemented by 14 semi-structured interviews with journalists working in print, broadcast and digital media. The analyses reveal persistent patterns of symbolic harm, including marginalized minority voices and dominant conflict-driven narratives, while the interviews illuminate journalists' ethical awareness, professional constraints, and critical engagement with empathy, bias and responsibility in everyday practice.

By integrating empirical evidence with normative ethical theory, the paper positions peace journalism as a harm-aware ethical framework that bridges virtue ethics, deontological responsibility, consequentialist harm reduction and the ethics of care. Central to this framework is moral imagination, the capacity to anticipate the social consequences of representation and to envision alternative narratives that affirm dignity rather than reproduce suffering. The paper thus contributes to debates on the ethics of mediated suffering by reframing minority representation as an ethical encounter and offering an adaptable framework for care-oriented, inclusive journalism in polarized media environments.

EMS02 Witnessing at a Distance: Practices, Ethics, and Politics of Mediated Suffering

PP 0380 Normalizing asymmetry of suffering in Czech television discussions of Gaza

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This paper examines how Czech public service television mediates distant suffering by constructing Palestinian identity and (non-)grievability in its flagship discussion programme *Události, komentáře* during the Israel–Gaza war. In available scholarship, less attention has been paid to how the suffering of Palestinians is shaped in semi-peripheral media systems whose geopolitical orientation and historical memory are strongly aligned with "core" Western narratives. Employing Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theoretical framework as well as emplying the conceptual framework of Critical Discourse Analysis tradition, we ask (1) How is Palestinian suffering discursively represented and made intelligible to Czech audiences? (2) How do journalistic performances of impartiality structure relationships between spectators and sufferers? (3) What ethical consequences follow from the civilisation framework that divides actors into a "civilised" moral community and a barbaric outside? In our analysis, we put special emphasis on how suffering and victimhood represent the structures of power, transposed into the Czech public sphere in its postransformational history and its dependence on Western allies.

Methodologically, the study combines Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis (text, discursive practice, socio-cultural context) with a world system sensibility that treats the semi-peripheral position of Czechia as a structural condition of discursive circulation and legitimacy. The empirical corpus comprises 111 programme segments broadcast between 7 October 2023 and 10 December 2024, including studio debates, political interviews, and moderator-framed report packages.

The analysis identifies a recurring hierarchy of voice and affect. Israeli suffering is more frequently individualised, narrated through recognisable political and civic subject positions, and rendered emotionally accessible, whereas Palestinian suffering is commonly massified (as "losses," "numbers," "population density"), displaced into logistical/technocratic registers, and routinely recontextualised through securitisation. Moderators' questions and quotations often collapse "Palestinians" into "Hamas/terrorism," psychologise Palestinian violence as moral pathology, and position humanitarian testimony as potentially partial, thus constricting the space in which Palestinian civilianhood and political subjectivity can be recognised. Grammatical and rhetorical patterns further normalise asymmetry: Israeli measures are frequently described via passive or necessity-inflected formulations, while Palestinian violence is attributed in active and agentive terms. Finally, civilisational discourse ("the civilised world must defend itself") stabilises a moral boundary that invites spectators to identify with order, rationality, and Western alliance politics, while rendering Palestinian claims to statehood and self-determination peripheral and ambiguous.

The paper contributes to the working group agenda by showing how mediated suffering is not only represented, but governed by objectivity rituals and civilisational binaries that unevenly distribute empathy, responsibility and complicity. It argues for integrating semi-peripheral dependency and transnational discursive hierarchies into theorising ethical witnessing and post-national solidarities.

EMS02 Witnessing at a Distance: Practices, Ethics, and Politics of Mediated Suffering

PP 0381 Technologies of hope: Investigative labour in Russia's war on Ukraine

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In this paper, we conceptualize hope labour in wartime investigative work, thus providing an excursion into the technologies of work of media professionals on the data frontlines of Russia's war on Ukraine while extending the concept of hope labour beyond its economic focus and pointing to its moral dimension. Drawing from the extant understanding of hope labour, the labour of witnessing, and technologies of hope, we seek to contribute to a more granular understanding of *how* hope is performed in wartime investigation work, and *what* the professionals engaged in wartime (digital) investigations hope for. In particular, our analysis addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the objects of wartime hope labour and associated motivations?
RQ2: What are the technologies of hope labour involved in wartime investigations?
RQ1a: What practices, sources, and technologies do the wartime investigations engage?
RQ2b: What forms of collaborations does hope labour produce?

Empirically, the study builds on ethnographic fieldwork – semi-structured interviews with 12 media professionals, (digital) investigators, and experts in media advocacy organizations, all of them investigating and narrating diverse aspects of the Russian War on Ukraine, and participant observations at media conferences and seminars in Ukraine and beyond. We study people who observe, document, analyze and archive the war – and specifically, potential or yet-to-be-defined war crimes – for various national and international media, social, political, security and legal institutions and organizations. In their daily work, they accumulate, process, and organize big quantities of data produced either by digital technologies, or through

direct on-the-ground work. We suggest that the community of professionals involved in wartime investigations hopes for accountability and justice, contributing to collective memory and policy change. We argue that the ultimate object of hope is the hope itself; the reproduction of hopefulness. We also show how the technologies of hope combine established investigation practices with new (digital) tools and approaches, and how they rely on collaboration and collective action. Analyzing this extremely morally laden case of media labour, the paper thus broadens the current economically reductionist and individualistic way of conceptualizing hope labour in media studies.

MAI01 Media and Intimacy: Practices, Relations, and Transformations

PP 0650 Everyday meme sharing as digital intimacy: How private exchanges shape identity and closeness among young adults

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This paper investigates how everyday meme-sharing practices among young adults function as a form of digital intimacy and identity negotiation. While memes have been widely examined as cultural and political artifacts, their role in private, interpersonal communication remains underexplored. Drawing on media practice theory and narrative approaches to identity, this study conceptualizes memes as 'small stories' and affective artefacts that sustain emotional closeness in digitally mediated relationships (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008; Bamberg, 2016).

The research addresses two questions: (1) How do young adults integrate memes into their everyday media practices? (2) In what ways does meme-sharing foster intimacy and shape identity in private digital exchanges? To answer these questions, we conducted two qualitative focus group interviews with 14 Danish undergraduate students (early 20s) who actively engage with memes. The interviews, designed as informal group conversations, were complemented by brief questionnaires mapping participants' meme-related habits. Data were coded using grounded theory techniques to identify recurring themes and patterns (Charmaz, 2000).

Findings reveal that meme-sharing is a habitual yet meaningful practice embedded in daily routines. Participants primarily engage in private circulation rather than remixing, positioning memes as personalised communicative tokens and 'phatic' gestures that sustain co-presence (Malinowski, 1923; Sadowski, 2016). These exchanges serve multiple functions: maintaining emotional closeness, initiating low-stakes contact, and negotiating identity through shared cultural references. The affective and relational work of memes is evident in their framing as 'little gifts' that strengthen bonds and enable subtle facework (Goffman, 1955). Meme-sharing also supports ambient awareness and distributed intimacy across time and space (Lupton, 2017; McGlotten, 2013). This resonates with Berlant's account of intimacy as narrations of shared life and attachment, and with Rambukkana's articulation of digital intimacies operating across scales (Berlant, 1998, 2000; Rambukkana, 2024).

Conceptually, we situate these practices within media practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Couldry, 2004) and the distinction between dispersed and integrative practices (Schatzki, 1996; Warde, 2004), showing how private meme exchanges function as micro-participation oriented toward peers and family (Carpentier, 2011) and as affinity-building within everyday infrastructures (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Paasonen et al., 2023). We further draw on work on mediation and intimate infrastructures, living in media (Deuze, 2012) and the intensification of relations with non-human entities (Kember & Zylinska, 2015), to illuminate how platform affordances scaffold low-friction intimate contact. From meme studies, we mobilize concepts of prism, intertextuality, and templatability (Shifman, 2013; Wiggins, 2019; Rintel, 2013) and the kairotic timing of circulation (Ross & Rivers, 2017), explaining why particular memes resonate in specific relational moments.

In dialogue with the ECC 2026 theme "Shifting Grounds: Paths, Connections, and Futures," the paper shows how mundane, private exchanges reconfigure intimacy as a site of transformation, encounter, and possibility. We argue that everyday meme-sharing exemplifies shifting intimate infrastructures that connect private experience with broader cultural, technological, and governance dynamics of datafication and platformisation (Paasonen et al., 2023; Deuze, 2012). Ultimately, the study demonstrates how seemingly trivial communicative acts operate as narrative devices and embedded cultural practices that shape identity and sustain closeness in contemporary mediated life.

MAI01 Media and Intimacy: Practices, Relations, and Transformations

PP 0651 Intimacy as a professional mode in narrative journalism

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In recent years, journalism has increasingly moved away from ideals of emotional distance and detached objectivity toward forms of storytelling that bring journalists closer to the lives, emotions, and experiences they describe. This shift is often framed in terms of transparency, authenticity, or emotional openness, yet the concept of intimacy has received limited theoretical attention and is frequently associated with personal confession or autobiographical exposure. This paper proposes to rethink intimacy not as a private disclosure or a deviation from professional norms, but as an emerging professional mode within narrative journalism.

Following previous theoretical work on emotional journalism, narrative forms, and changing norms of journalistic authority, the paper explores how intimacy is produced through stylistic and relational practices rather than through self-revelation alone. Narrative voice, focalization, scene construction, and attention to emotional detail function as techniques that generate a sense of closeness between journalists, their subjects, and audiences. In this sense, intimacy functions less as a personal revelation and more as a mediated form of emotional closeness, shaped by intention and professional conventions.

Questions about intimacy as a journalistic practice arise at a moment when trust in traditional media has weakened and expectations of transparency and emotional presence have intensified. In this context, intimacy becomes a way of re-configuring the relationship between journalism and its public, offering what can be understood as a symbolic space of recognition and care. Rather than weakening professional credibility, intimate forms of storytelling can support emerging forms of authority shaped through relational engagement and emotional connection.

The paper combines a theoretical discussion with a stylistic analysis of award-winning narrative journalism, focusing on texts that received the reporting first prize within the Superscrieri, the national journalism competition in Romania, over the past fifteen years. Using narratological variables such as voice, focalization, scene construction, and characterization, the analysis explores how intimacy is constructed through narrative form rather than through explicit self-disclosure. This approach allows the paper to examine intimacy as a patterned and recognizable professional practice, shaped by stylistic choices and evaluative criteria, while keeping in view ongoing concerns about emotion, trust, and relational proximity in contemporary journalistic practice.

MAI01 Media and Intimacy: Practices, Relations, and Transformations

PP 0652 Human-Machine narration. How Generative AI transforms everyday storytelling

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This paper investigates how the ways we make sense of and with stories are transformed with "communicative AI".[i] With the rise of large language models (LLMs) and GenAI, the personal, momentary, and open-ended stories of the everyday are increasingly being told to and with chatbots rather than intimate human others.[ii] As part of an emergent shift from primarily functional to intimate uses of the new technologies, people turn to GenAI platforms to, e.g., recount the small incidents of the day, test out social dilemmas and personal values, vent about family conflicts, engage in existential conversations, foster companionship, and create personalized fantasies.[iii] To understand this cultural shift in everyday storytelling and communication, the paper asks:

1) How and why do users engage with GenAI when telling everyday stories, and what relations, benefits, and challenges do they experience?
2) What are the social and cultural implications of telling stories with and to GenAI?

Drawing on text samples, interviews with, and media diaries from 10 adult regular users of GenAI for storytelling purposes, the paper combines insights from the Human-Machine Communication-paradigm and the stories "in/as practice"-paradigm to coin and develop the framework of Human-Machine Narration (HMN). HMN is understood as the entangled storytelling practices emerging between the prompt of a human and the response of a machine designed to communicate, and the analysis shows how HMN affords narrative meaning making and identity construction through the poisoning of selves, the personalization of communication, and the attribution of intent to GenAI systems. The paper argues that in the intimate everyday usage of GenAI a new form of technological self-reflexivity emerges where the question 'who am I?' becomes inseparable from considerations of 'what is GenAI?' and, even more so, 'what is GenAI *to me*?'. By embracing an emic perspective, the paper contributes with new knowledge on how media users engage with GenAI outside functional domains. This is important in a context where the everyday existential, therapeutic, social, and supportive uses of GenAI is still "poorly understood" and empirical qualitative work scarce.[iv]

[i] Guzman & Lewis. 2020. "Artificial Intelligence and Communication: A Human-machine Communication Research Agenda". *New Media & Society* 22.1: 70–86.

[ii] de Fina & Georgakopoulou (eds.). 2015. *The Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell; Ochs & Capps. 2001. *Living Narrative: Creating Lives in Everyday Storytelling*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[iii] Bozdag. 2025. "The AI-mediated intimacy economy: A paradigm shift in digital interactions". *AI & SOCIETY* 40: 2285–2306; Zao-Sanders. 2025. "How People are Really Using Generative AI Now". *Filtered*. Open Access report. https://learn.filtered.com/hubfs/The%202025%20Top100%20Gen%20AI%20Use%20Case%20Report.pdf, 11.06.2025.

[iv] Lupinacci et al. 2024. "Revitalising the concept of the everyday in internet research". Panel presented at *AoIR2024: The 25th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers*. Sheffield, UK: AoIR. http://spir.aoir.org; Burgess et al. 2022. *Everyday Data Cultures*. Cambridge: Polity Pres; Ytre-Arne & Das. 2021. "Audiences' Communicative Agency in a Datafied Age: Interpretative, relational and Increasingly Prospective". *Communication Theory* 31: 779–797; Hepp et al. 2024. "Mediatization and Human-Machine Communication: Trajectories, Discussions, Perspectives". *Human-Machine Communication* 7: 7–21.

MAI01 Media and Intimacy: Practices, Relations, and Transformations

PP 0653 Queering the sext: Bodies, desire, and digital intimacy among Italian emerging adults

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Sexting has become an ordinary yet contested practice within digital intimacies, where technologies mediate desire, embodiment, and relationality. Building on digital intimacy scholarship (Berlant, 1998; Attwood et al., 2017; Paasonen, 2018), this contribution approaches sexting as part of the infrastructural conditions through which intimate relations are produced, negotiated, and felt in everyday life. While existing research has predominantly framed sexting through risk, regulation, and heteronormative assumptions, queer and positive perspectives on this practice remain marginal.

This paper explores how self-identified queer Italian emerging adults construct their digital sexuality and (dis)embodiment through sexting practices.

Empirically, the study draws on qualitative material produced with 64 Italian self-identified queer participants (aged 18–35). Data were co-produced through focus groups, creative zine-making workshops, and in-depth interviews with body-mapping techniques, designed to capture the multimodal, affective, and embodied dimensions of sexting as a media practice.

Analytically, it focuses on two questions: (1) how sexting is queered as a media practice, (2) how bodies are mediated and experienced in sexting as playful, carnal, and (dis)embodied matter. Rather than treating queerness as a fixed identity category, the paper conceptualises it as a situated and strategic mode of meaning-making, enacted through everyday interactions with multimodal digital affective exchanges.

The analysis reveals sexting as a polyvalent practice operating across three interconnected registers: as a site of struggle between sexual agency and structural constraint; as a creative and sensual practice of meaning-making; and as a space that simultaneously challenges and reproduces normative expectations. Grounded in Paasonen's (2011, 2018) theorisations of carnal resonance and sexual playfulness, it demonstrates how sexting generates playful affective intensities through entanglements of bodies, technologies, and desire.

Participants mobilise sexting as a space for navigating intimacy, vulnerability, and playful exploration. Sexting serves for fantasy formulation, gender experimentation, and sexual development, while serving as a channel for testing compatibility and deepening relations. Moreover, it emerges as both a self-reflexive and relational practice, queering conventional assumptions about digital sexuality as other-directed. Through visual and textual construction of bodies (metaphorical or synecdochal), participants exceed offline material corporeal constraints in their sextual experience.

This research also illuminates how gender socialisation and queer scripts constrain sextual possibilities. Whilst sexting offers spaces for reimagining gender performances, it simultaneously reproduces some normative patterns. The findings reveal how digital sexual practices generate hybrid configurations articulating cognitive, corporeal, and technological dimensions, not as simple digitisation of pre-existing sexual practices, but as the emergence of new forms of embodied sexual subjectivity.

This study contributes to digital intimacy scholarship by centring non-normative experiences, demonstrating how queer digital sexual practices operate. By employing creative methodologies within a Research Brave Space paradigm, the research captures complex, embodied experiences often overlooked by conventional approaches. The findings challenge binary framings positioning sexting as either inherently empowering or necessarily problematic, revealing the simultaneous presence of agency and constraint, pleasure and risk, creativity and normativity within the same practice. It ultimately argues that sexting functions as technology of the self and body extending far beyond erotic exchange to encompass questions of identity formation, power negotiation, and social belonging within digital cultures.

MLC01 Contemporary Approaches to Media Literacies and Digital Competencies

PP 0084 Digital and AI competences of young people: A Systematic Literature Review (2020–25) from the lens of Media Literacy

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The rapid diffusion of datafied platforms and more recently generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has drawn further attention to how young people develop competences to access, evaluate, create, and participate in digital and media environments. While digital competencies and media literacy have been widely researched, the period between 2020 and 2025 marks an intensification of scholarly and policy interest in AI and adjacent constructs (e.g. algorithmic, data, and synthetic media literacies). This paper seeks to present a systematic literature review focusing on this period, aiming to map out how research conceptualises and measures young people's digital and AI-related competences and what trends are emerging, from the point of view of Media Literacy Studies. Additionally, the study aims to discuss the practical and ethical implications foregrounded for media literacy education.

Following PRISMA-guided procedures, the review synthesises peer-reviewed studies focusing on children and adolescents, published in English between January 2020 and December 2025. The analysis codes (1) competence frameworks and definitions; (2) methodological approaches and instruments; (3) competence domains emphasised (information evaluation, creation, safety, civic engagement); and (4) reported outcomes and contextual factors (school, family, platform use, socio-economic conditions).

In the preliminary analysis of the results, three trends stand out. First, research progressively shifts from broad digital skills towards more specific competence clusters, particularly information evaluation, datafication awareness, platform/algorithmic understanding, and the use of prompts to interact with AI. Second, post-2022 studies increasingly treat GenAI as a media literacy challenge, prioritising young people's practices around synthetic media, deepfakes, and credibility assessment, while documenting uneven understandings and opportunities. Third, despite the growth of AI literacy discourse, empirical work still relies heavily on self-report measures and short instruments, with comparatively fewer validated assessments of AI-related understanding or critical agency.

The review also identifies ethical concerns that are increasingly central: privacy and data exploitation, biases and discrimination, the epistemic disruption associated with AI-generated content, and risks emerging from young people's encounters with AI-mediated persuasion and relational systems. Practically, our findings support the urgency of integrating critical AI literacy into media literacy curricula (beyond "how to use tools"), strengthening teacher training, and prioritising equity-sensitive interventions that address access and knowledge gaps.

MLC01 Contemporary Approaches to Media Literacies and Digital Competencies

PP 0085 A critical analysis of the new European Digital Competence Framework DigComp 3.0. Has AI literacy been successfully integrated?

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At the end of 2025 the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission published a new version of the Digital Competence Framework (Cosgrove & Cachia, 2025). The DigComp framework is one of the most widely used digital competence frameworks both in Europe and beyond. The new Version 3.0 updates the framework in '(…) response to digital technological developments, trends and practices, and to support several EU policy initiatives on digital skills' (Cosgrove & Cachia, 2022). More specifically Version 3.0 '(…) includes a new section outlining learning outcomes which provides a more granular view of digital competence that allows easy and consistent interpretation and application of the framework, as well as the systematic and transversal integration of AI competence across the framework'.

The integration of AI and more specifically GenAI competences seems to be the main motivation for the update from the former 2022 Version 2.2. This seems to reflect the growing recognition of AI literacy as transversal, and embedded across other digital competence domains, rather than a specialized ability. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the integration of AI literacy in DigComp 3.0. The paper we present is an updated version of a widely read and cited article we wrote analyzing DigComp 2.2 in 2022. In line with that article we will analyze the new DigComp 3.0 framework based on an extensive content analysis of the 523 *Learning Outcomes* of the framework.

First, we will map the learning outcomes against the Flemish Data Literacy Competence Model (own work, 2025). In our former analysis of DigComp 2.2 we came to the conclusion that DigComp 2.2 is not neutral, as codes are not distributed evenly among the different DCLM competences. Furthermore, DigComp 2.2 puts a strong emphasis on understanding AI and data and less on being able to use AI and data actively. In a world in which GenAI has been taken up by more than one

third of the European Population (Eurostat, 2025) it will be interesting to see whether DigComp 3.0 now focuses more on competences required for actively using GenAI.

Second, we will carry out a thematic content analysis working towards themes that emerge out of DigComp 3.0. In our analysis of DigComp 2.2, we observed that the framework focused strongly on security and privacy. Yet, aspects of environmental impact and citizenship were also mentioned. Again, it will be interesting to see whether new themes emerge out of DigComp 3.0.

Note: We are currently conducting the content analysis ensuring this paper will be ready by the conference.

- Cosgrove, J. and Cachia, R., *DigComp 3.0: European Digital Competence Framework- Fifth Edition*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2025, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2760/0001149, JRC144121.
- Eurostat. Use of artificial intelligence in enterprises. 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Use_of_artificial_intelligence_in_enterprises

MLC01 Contemporary Approaches to Media Literacies and Digital Competencies

PP 0086 Approaches to measuring media literacy: Lessons from crisis development

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This contribution primarily reflects on experiences with conducting contract research for the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) of the Czech Republic and focuses on the "paradox of complexity" faced by researchers in their efforts to measure media literacy comprehensively and scientifically validly under time constraints and the requirement to include the domain of media literacy as a whole and measure its levels across the entire population. Special attention is paid to the tension between theoretical comprehensiveness and empirical feasibility, which significantly shapes the design of large-scale assessment instruments. In developing the test, the authors drew on Renee Hobbs' five-competency model, which provides a comprehensive way to measure media literacy in its entirety. However, during the operationalization of the construct, fundamental limitations of this approach became apparent, particularly in the area of measuring productive skills and actions (Act), where an insurmountable barrier arises between declared knowledge and procedural actions. A way out of this methodological predicament is offered by the transfer of selected procedures from the field of language testing and language diagnostics, especially for the area of "Analysis and Evaluation" of media messages. The paper uses specific examples to show that this approach makes it possible to transform vague concepts associated with descriptions of media literacy such as "media understanding" into hierarchical, measurable, and standardized skill levels. In conclusion, the paper formulates a set of recommendations for the future development of media literacy tests. We argue for abandoning attempts at "comprehensive" tests in favor of tests focused on specific areas of media literacy, which would use established methods of linguistic and, by extension, psychometric diagnostics, and attempts to prove that this approach can overcome the paradox whereby the complexity of the theoretical model makes it impossible to measure it reliably and accurately in practice within large-scale assessment contexts.

MLC01 Contemporary Approaches to Media Literacies and Digital Competencies

PP 0087 Overreliance on generative AI? Digital inequalities in risk awareness and coping strategies

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As generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT are being rapidly adopted across society, they are entering not only professional and educational contexts, but likewise everyday practices, from information seeking to decision-making and creative activities. While techno-optimistic accounts celebrate this uptake for its promise of efficiency, productivity, and accessibility, a growing body of critical research points to potentially problematic implications of this widespread and routine use of GenAI technologies.

Recent studies have, for example, raised concerns about overreliance on GenAI tools, suggesting that frequent delegation of cognitive tasks to AI systems may foster cognitive offloading and longer-term cognitive debt, potentially undermining users' critical thinking and learning capacities. Learning from earlier research on the interplay between reliance on technological assistance and cognitive skills, we can assume that such consequences of GenAI use are not universal, but contingent on users' critical skills. Whether GenAI use leads to problematic overreliance depends on how users perceive and navigate potential risks, and on the coping strategies they develop.

Research on digital inequalities has consistently shown that factors such as education, age, and socioeconomic status shape users' digital skills, critical literacy, and capacity to anticipate and manage technological risks. This raises the question whether similar inequalities emerge in the context of GenAI use. This paper therefore studies, which groups may be at greater risk of experiencing negative outcomes of overreliance on GenAI tools, due to structural differences in risk awareness and coping skills.

Drawing on survey data from more than 400 participants, this paper examines (1) how users perceive the cognitive risks associated with GenAI tools, (2) the extent to which they report engaging in coping strategies aimed at mitigating overreliance, and (3) how these perceptions and practices vary across different socio-economic backgrounds.

By empirically studying critical AI literacy through a digital inequality lens, this study contributes to a more differentiated understanding of who is better equipped to critically and reflectively engage with generative AI, and who may be more vulnerable to its potentially negative effects related to cognitive debt and deskilling. In doing so, the paper advances research on human–AI interaction by showing possible outcome inequalities in GenAI use due to inequalities in risk awareness and coping skills.

MLC01 Contemporary Approaches to Media Literacies and Digital Competencies

PP 0088 Media literacy approaches to the platformisation of generative AI

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In this paper, I introduce a theory-led account of generative AI (GAI) by situating it within the platform society (van Dijck et al 2018; Nielsen & Ganter 2022; Feher 2025) and advancing media literacy approaches that address the pedagogical challenges emerging from platformised AI technologies. Drawing on research on digital platforms, digital pedagogy, and playful learning, I conceptualise GAI as shaping designed interactions and structuring interfaces for human-technology engagement. I argue that GAI occupies a dual role in education: as an object of descriptive analysis focused on user interface design and affordance structures, and as a basis for prescriptive educational recommendations for interaction with GAI platforms.

Framed through media literacy, this approach connects critical understandings of chatbot interfaces, algorithmic bias, and uncritical use to the everyday practices through which students and teachers encounter GAI in educational settings. In upper secondary schools, an under-researched domain in relation to GAI, such encounters are formative for the development of critical digital competencies necessary in contemporary societies.

The theoretical foundation of this paper builds on the collaborative GAIYA research project (2026–30), which develops an original approach by integrating technological mediation theory (Verbeek 2015; Greer et al 2024; de Boer et al 2018), platform societies, media affordances (Ronzhyn et al 2022; van Leeuwen 2005), digital pedagogy and digital learning design (Pratschke 2024), as well as playful learning and AI play (Whitton 2022; Kangas & Heljakka 2024). Technological mediation theory clarifies how GAI platforms mediate knowledge perception in teaching and learning, while platform society perspectives illuminate the infrastructural position of GAI within intermedial environments. Media affordances direct attention to the concrete configurations of interfaces and tools that enable and constrain educational practices.

Digital pedagogy and learning design connect these affordances to purposeful learning experiences, and playful learning and AI play emphasise curiosity and creativity as integral to meaningful engagement. Anchored in media literacy, I argue that understanding these dynamics is essential to fostering critical engagement with GAI and for designing learning environments that promote reflective and informed use of chatbot technologies.

For GAIYA, media literacy approaches become actionable for the design of interactive learning, guiding prescriptive recommendations for how to engage with GAI platforms in ways that harness their educational potential and mitigate challenges for young students. The aim is a coherent conceptual basis for analysing and redesigning educational approaches to GAI, strengthening a critically informed utilisation of new teaching and learning technologies.

GAIYA (Generative AI in Education for Young Adults) is a Nordic-Baltic research project examining how generative AI, particularly chatbot platforms, transforms upper secondary education. Grounded in media and AI literacy, it analyses classroom practices and policy frameworks to develop strategies for responsible, future-oriented GAI integration. Funded by NordForsk under the "Nordic-Baltic initiative on responsible use of Artificial Intelligence" (project no. 231681), GAIYA promotes collaborative research for critically informed and innovative educational approaches.

MLC02 Developing Media Literacies in Schools

PP 0300 What draws teachers and educators to practice media literacy education? Lessons from a public policy evaluation in French-speaking Belgium

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Media literacy education (MLE) is still being institutionalized at international, national, and regional levels, and its translation into public policy remains partial. Training and professional development are key levers for advancing MLE, yet they often rely on individual motivation rather than institutional mechanisms. The effective adoption of MLE instruments by teachers and educators is therefore critical for policy success, making it essential to understand their perceptions and motivations

to engage with these tools. Yet, research assessing the adoption and effectiveness of MLE policy instruments from the perspectives of teachers and educators remains scarce.

This presentation reports on the first phase of a two-year evaluation of the MLE policy implemented by the French-speaking Community of Belgium (FCB). The evaluation focuses on instruments supported by the FCB to promote MLE, including three regional initiatives addressing journalism, news media, and cinema education in compulsory education; four funding programs enabling teachers and educators to develop pilot MLE projects; professional training opportunities in MLE; and the annual Media Literacy Week organized by the Higher Council for Media Education (CSEM).

The project pursues three objectives: (1) to document motivational and contextual factors influencing education professionals' decisions to use—or not to use—FCB-supported MLE instruments; (2) to analyze the MLE practices of professionals who have adopted these instruments and their assessments of their pedagogical effects; and (3) to produce a needs-based mapping of MLE in French-speaking Belgium, identifying met and unmet needs to enhance the impact and relevance of current initiatives.

The evaluation is structured in two phases. The first, exploratory phase (09/2025–08/2026), combines focus groups with teachers and educators who have not used the assessed instruments ("non-users") but have shown interest in MLE, and semi-structured interviews with those who have. The second phase (09/2026–08/2027) will deploy a quantitative online survey to generalize and validate the findings of the exploratory phase among broader samples of teachers and educators.

This presentation will report on findings from interviews with recent users of the assessed MLE instruments (N ~ 30, currently underway), encompassing diverse socio-demographic and professional profiles from compulsory education, youth work, adult education, and cultural sectors. We will present the results of a thematic analysis of the interview data. Key outcomes of this analysis include (1) a mapping of participants' conceptions of MLE and how these inform their practice; (2) a typology of motivational and contextual factors that facilitate or hinder adoption, along with related needs; and (3) an assessment of how the assessed MLE instruments align with or transform existing practices and their perceived impact on beneficiaries' media literacy.

Finally, the presentation will discuss the methodological transferability and potential replicability of the project's approach, and its value for international comparison. For researchers, it offers a template for comparable studies in other contexts; for policymakers, it provides a means to generate evidence-based insights to inform and improve MLE policy design.

MLC02 Developing Media Literacies in Schools

PP 0301 Teachers' knowledge and understandings of media literacy: Insights from knowledge-assessment data collected in a professional development training programme in Latvia

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As media literacy is increasingly framed as a transversal competence rather than a standalone subject, teachers across diverse disciplinary backgrounds are expected to integrate media literacy into their pedagogical practice. This raises an important question for media literacy research and education: how do teachers understand media literacy, its core competencies, and the risks and challenges children and young people face in the information environment.

This paper presents an exploratory analysis of anonymised knowledge-assessment data collected in the context of teachers' professional development in media literacy.

The data derive from a certification test completed in Latvia between October and December 2025 by approximately 350 teachers who participated in a 12-academic-hour media literacy training programme implemented as part of a publicly funded teachers' professional development initiative. The training programme was designed and delivered by the author of the paper. Completion of the test was a formal requirement for receiving a course certificate. Importantly, the data were not originally collected for research purposes but as part of educational assessment and quality assurance. The analysis is therefore retrospective and based exclusively on aggregated, anonymised results.

The test functioned as a structured knowledge check rather than a self-report survey and focused on thematic areas addressed during the course: conceptual definitions of media literacy; commonly cited core media literacy competencies; children's and young people's media use and associated risks; emerging media consumption trends; the pedagogical role of teachers in fostering critical engagement with media; and distinctions between related concepts such as media literacy and informational resilience. Participants represented six training groups and a wide range of professional backgrounds, including social and civic education, language education, natural sciences, arts, and non-formal education contexts.

While the empirical material originates from Latvia, the analytical focus is not on national policy evaluation. In the Latvian education system, media literacy is not taught as a separate subject but is embedded across several of the nationally defined transversal competencies, such as critical thinking and problem-solving, civic participation, and digital skills. This structural positioning makes the case particularly relevant for international discussions on cross-curricular media literacy education.

Methodologically, the paper treats assessment results as indicators of prevailing conceptual framings and recurring areas of uncertainty rather than as measures of individual competence or representative national trends. The analysis identifies patterns in correct and incorrect responses, highlighting which dimensions of media literacy tend to be well established in teachers' understanding and which are more likely to be narrowed, conflated, or framed primarily through technical or protective lenses.

For the ECREA audience, this contribution demonstrates how routinely collected assessment data from professional development contexts can be ethically and productively repurposed for reflective analysis. The findings offer transferable insights into common conceptual tensions in media literacy education and provide implications for the design of teacher training programmes in contexts where media literacy is distributed across disciplines.

MLC02 Developing Media Literacies in Schools

PP 0302 Developing media literacy in teacher education: A comparative perspective from France and Germany

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Alongside deep mediatisation (Hepp, 2018), fostering media literacy among young people has become a key educational challenge. In order to effectively support pupils in their media socialisation, teachers must acquire media teaching skills from an early stage (Nickel et al., 2023). In both Germany and France, public policies recognise the development of media literacy as part of the professionalisation of teachers in higher education (KMK, 2017; Corroy, 2022).

Despite their geographical proximity, the two countries have different educational governance structures and approaches to teacher professionalisation. In Germany, the federal states (Länder) are responsible for school curricula, although the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) defines common guidelines, such as those relating to media competence. These guidelines are then implemented differently across the federal states (Bosler, 2024), but there are some loopholes (Schniefer-Rohs, 2012). In France, media and information literacy (MIL) is gradually being integrated into school curricula as a cross-curricular subject, primarily the responsibility of teacher-librarians, who have the same status as other teachers (Corroy, 2022).

This research examines the professionalisation of future teachers regarding media literacy in France and Germany, as well as the values and attitudes conveyed and the observable differences and similarities. First, a qualitative content analysis of policy documents was conducted to identify the knowledge that teachers should possess regarding media education (Bardin, 1977; Mayring, 2022). Secondly, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts involved in higher education teacher training in both countries. These interviews provided insights into current practices and were analysed using qualitative content analysis.

The results reveal a discrepancy between the imperative nature of official German texts, which stipulate that teachers must acquire media competencies, and the reality that such courses are not consistently mandatory. The development of teachers' media-educational attitude was identified as a key component within actual practices. Although official texts mention values, most respondents feel uncomfortable with the term. In France, those responsible for training teacher-librarians support making MIL compulsory. However, they highlight tensions between institutional requirements and the reality of schools, where MIL remains largely invisible. In terms of values, media education in France has a strong civic dimension. French respondents refer to pupils as future 'citizens', whereas German respondents focus on individuals independently of the state. In both cases, media education inspired by popular education predominates, with active methods favoured over traditional pedagogy. The interviewees advise students to move away from a 'protectionist' approach and start from pupils' media practices. There is common ground internationally in terms of understanding pupils' media practices and the associated educational approaches.

Adopting a comparative approach (Esser, 2019) allows to take a step back from national frameworks and identify new avenues for reflection and action in the field of media literacy. Situating these findings within broader debates on professionalisation enables valuable contributions to be made to discussions on future pathways for developing media competencies in teacher education.

MLC02 Developing Media Literacies in Schools

PP 0303 Evaluating a media education teaching sequence aimed at developing advertising literacy competencies among 11–12-year-old pupils

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By the end of primary school, pre-adolescents spend several hours a day on YouTube (Smahel et al., 2020). Among the content they consume are videos that blend entertainment with commercial communication through product placements—a strategy defined as the deliberate and planned delivery of persuasive intent in a discreet manner, in exchange for

monetary or other valuable compensation for the communicator (Guo et al., 2019, cited in Lemoine & Regnier, 2021, p. 1). This practice introduces brands into non-commercial contexts while ensuring that audiences, particularly young viewers, do not perceive the underlying advertising intent (Rozendaal et al., 2016; Feijoo et al., 2024). This is especially true when their emotional attachment to YouTubers—many of whom frequently feature product placements in their videos (El Mouldi et al., 2020)—overrides their critical judgment (Feijoo et al., 2024).

In a context where the aims and content of schooling are constantly reconfigured in response to societal changes, these emerging social practices highlight the need for the school system to address digital advertising discourse that may influence pre-adolescents' behavior. The goal is to help them develop advertising literacy competencies—a specific form of literacy involving the identification, understanding, and critical analysis of digital commercial messages (Rozendaal et al., 2016)—which remains largely neglected in formal education. This presentation is part of a doctoral research project that seeks to design and test the content and modalities of teaching advertising literacy competencies to 11–12-year-old pupils through a media education sequence co-developed with participating teachers.

Our presentation focuses on the first iteration of the evaluation of this sequence, using a quasi-experimental design with non-equivalent groups: a test group of five final-year primary classes that received the sequence, and a control group of two classes at the same grade level, drawn from five French-speaking Belgian primary schools. We will present the methodology and findings from pre- and post-tests conducted around the sequence. These tests, based on the same instrument, aimed to document pupils' pre-existing advertising literacy competencies and inform the sequence design (pre-test), and subsequently assess their progress and the sequence's effectiveness (post-test). The instrument included questions about pre-adolescents' social media practices and a practical task designed to document their advertising literacy competencies when confronted with several product placements.

We conclude by discussing the significance of this research. Beyond its scientific contribution to understanding the drivers of a new form of digital media literacy, our study is meant to provide teachers with pedagogical resources to support their pupils in developing their online media practices in an informed and critical manner. More broadly, it intends to guide public policy on media education in a context where this domain is increasingly prioritized in the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

MLC02 Developing Media Literacies in Schools

PP 0304 Film education in Portuguese schools: A mapping of the seventh art's integration in public education

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In an era marked by intense polarisation, growing radicalisation, and the resurgence of extremist positions, film education is a particularly relevant field. Since the early days of the seventh art, film has been recognised as a medium with strong educational potential, yet also as one capable of shaping and reinforcing specific representations and attitudes (Reia-Baptista, 2008). Film education goes beyond fostering critical consumption of film: it involves cultivating an understanding of the moving image as a tool for reading the world, endowed with aesthetic, social, and pedagogical potential (Liz, 2022). Recent research has shown that pedagogical approaches centred on the analysis and production of films foster critical and intercultural competences, enabling pupils to question cultural representations and stimulating reflexive capacities (Glotov, 2023; Glotov & Kotilainen, 2021). Thus, at a time when academic and policy concerns have increasingly centred on the digital—often overlooking other media forms that remain part of children's everyday media repertoires (Pereira et al., 2024)—, this communication examines the place of cinema within schools through the Portuguese case. It considers how the seventh art can contribute to a culturally relevant education and to foster critical and active citizenship within contemporary educational contexts. We seek to identify and characterise film-related practices in Portuguese public education. To this end, we conducted an analysis of the educational projects of 425 school clusters and non-clustered schools across mainland Portugal (52.53% of all public-school units), complemented by interviews with the management and/or other leaders of 15 school clusters. The educational projects were obtained through the school websites, and when unavailable, they were requested directly from school leadership. The selection of interviewees followed a quota sampling strategy, encompassing the various regions of mainland Portugal. Both the educational projects and the interviews were subjected to content analysis using MAXQDA software (version 24, without AI Assist). The analysis employed categories developed a posteriori, validated, and applied by the authors of the study. The findings show that cinema is present in Portuguese public schools through a wide range of initiatives and projects. References were identified in the educational projects of 21.88% of the public-school units analysed, and its use in curricular and extracurricular activities was mentioned in interviews with nine clusters. These data point to a significant yet modest role for cinema in Portuguese public education, despite the country's long-standing tradition of film education (Pinto et al., 2011). In cases where cinema is present, its integration into school occurs within subject-based classroom practices, but especially through projects and initiatives often developed in collaboration with external partners. The findings highlight the crucial role of such collaborations, most notably the National Cinema Plan, in promoting the integration of the seventh art in schools. The approaches to cinema

reflect the existence of film education in its multiple dimensions (Clarembeaux, 2010; Fantin, 2006; Liz, 2022): film viewing, critical analysis, and production. However, the data indicate that the latter dimension, film production, is less frequently represented.

MLC03 Mapping and Evaluating Media Literacies

PP 0426 Warning or Guiding? Comparing the effect of positive versus negative boosting interventions and the role of repetition for the effects of misinformation

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The spread of misinformation poses a growing threat to democratic societies and is widely considered one of the most pressing global risks of the coming years (Ecker et al., 2022). Although the actual share of misinformation in people's daily information diets is relatively small, public concern about false information is high, coinciding with declining trust in media, political institutions, and democracy (Droog et al., 2025; Van Erkel et al., 2024). As a result, substantial efforts have been devoted to designing interventions that strengthen citizens' resilience against misinformation.

Among these interventions, media literacy and pre-emptive strategies such as boosting have shown promise. Boosting aims to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to detect misleading information and evaluate sources more effectively (Ziemer & Rothmund, 2024). While such interventions are generally effective in improving misinformation detection, growing evidence suggests they may also have unintended consequences (Droog et al., 2025). In particular, alarmist interventions that emphasize the dangers and pervasiveness of misinformation may increase fear, cynicism, and skepticism, potentially leading individuals to distrust reliable news as well (Acerbi et al., 2022). This tension has sparked recent debates on whether misinformation interventions should focus less on warning and more on fostering informed trust, emotional resilience, and acceptance of credible information.

This work-in-progress study contributes to this debate by systematically comparing the effects of different framings of boosting interventions. Specifically, we examine whether a trust-building intervention focused on recognizing reliable news can reduce susceptibility to misinformation without undermining broader news attitudes, compared to a more alarmist intervention that emphasizes misinformation threats. In addition, we investigate whether repeated exposure to such interventions strengthens or alters their effects over time.

Using a two-wave between-subjects experiment ($N \approx 1{,}500$), we apply a 3×2 factorial design that varies 1) intervention type (alarmist boosting vs. trust-building boosting vs. no intervention) and 2) repetition (single exposure vs. repeated exposure after one month). After the exposure to the intervention, participants evaluate news articles, complete measures of news literacy application, and report on broader media-related attitudes, including fear of misinformation, media trust, cynicism, and skepticism. The stimuli consist of graphically designed literacy interventions that were pretested and differ systematically in content focus (detecting misinformation vs. identifying reliable news), language tone (threatening vs. calm), and visual design (alarming vs. calming colors). Data collection is completed for Wave 1 and currently ongoing for Wave 2. The study has received ethical approval and was pre-registered. By comparing warning-based and guiding approaches to boosting, and by examining the role of repetition, this study aims to inform the design of misinformation interventions that not only improve detection of false information but also support informed trust and emotional resilience in contemporary information environments.

MLC03 Mapping and Evaluating Media Literacies

PP 0427 Mapping the landscape of intervention programmes to mitigate mis- and disinformation: Findings from a scoping review

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This scoping review synthesises 132 studies of interventions targeting misinformation/disinformation and AI literacy. It maps intervention designs, delivery, implementation conditions, outputs, outcomes, effectiveness, and challenges, and compares AI literacy with broader digital and media literacy approaches. We searched multiple bibliographic databases for English-language publications (2021–2025) using terms covering mis- and disinformation, digital or AI contexts, literacy/skills, and intervention programmes. From 4,036 records, 132 studies met eligibility criteria after de-duplication and staged screening. Data were charted with a logic-model-informed codebook and summarised descriptively. Evidence is concentrated in high-income Western settings, especially the United States and Western Europe, and interventions are commonly delivered online or in formal education. Evaluations are dominated by randomised and quasi-experimental designs measuring short-term outcomes; longitudinal, qualitative, and implementation-focused studies are less common. Participants

were most often students and adults recruited online; fewer studies addressed children, older adults, professionals, or structurally disadvantaged groups. About one-third referenced "vulnerable" populations, but vulnerability was often unspecified, limiting equity-sensitive conclusions. Interventions cluster into two partially overlapping categories. Digital/media/misinformation literacy interventions emphasise content-level evaluation (assessing claims, sources, and evidence), critical thinking, and resistance to misleading information. AI literacy interventions emphasise system-level understanding of algorithms and data-driven decision-making and foreground ethical and societal implications (e.g., bias, fairness, transparency, accountability). Most interventions required moderate resources, relying on educators or researchers, widely available digital tools, and teaching-oriented materials; few required advanced technical expertise or fully functional AI systems. Delivery commonly combined instruction with active learning (guided analysis, scenario-based activities, discussion, reflection). Programmes were usually facilitator-led and group-based, though many were self-directed online modules. Intensity was generally low to moderate (often one session or a small number of sessions) and longer, curriculum-integrated programmes were less common. Theoretical grounding was unevenly reported: digital literacy studies more often referenced media and information literacy frameworks, critical thinking, or inoculation theory, while AI literacy studies more often drew on socio-technical and ethics-oriented perspectives. Reported outputs mainly described participant reach and educational materials, typically in small to medium samples, with limited evidence on longer-term uptake. Outcomes were usually assessed shortly after delivery. Self-reports were common for attitudes and perceived competence, while knowledge and evaluative skills were more often assessed directly. Across both intervention types, the most consistent improvements were in knowledge acquisition and critical evaluation skills. AI literacy interventions were mixed in effects on trust and attitudes, often reflecting increased critical scepticism rather than acceptance. Implementation was facilitated by easy-to-use technologies, clear guidance, hands-on learning, and alignment with existing teaching models. Challenges included limited time, conceptual complexity (especially around AI), weak theory–design links, and ambitious goals relative to short-term measurement. In some misinformation interventions, increased caution about misinformation coincided with reduced confidence in accurate, trustworthy news. Overall, the field shows encouraging short-term effectiveness but limited insight into durability, transfer, scalability, and real-world impact. Future research should diversify populations and contexts, strengthen theory, use longitudinal and mixed-methods designs, and report implementation conditions and longer-term outcomes more consistently in future policy and practice.

MLC03 Mapping and Evaluating Media Literacies

PP 0428 Assessing media and information literacies in Serbia through an integrated index that measures the interplay between competences and environmental factors

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In the era of deepfakes, propaganda and disinformation campaigns, populistic rhetoric, the spread of hate speech and conspiracy theories, media and information literacy (MIL), in its broadest sense, remains central for developing resilience on both individual and social levels. Despite vibrant research field, educational and policy activities around MIL, there is conceptual plurality, operationalization diversity, more theoretical than empirical considerations, and relatively few studies encompassing broad population and age groups, as recent systematic literature review confirms (Schofield et al., 2023). Therefore, in this research we aim to design an index of MIL, measure MIL in Serbia, and set grounds for future cross-country comparisons.

We have opted for MIL concept, treating it as an umbrella term - integrating media, information, digital, civic and other literacies that are gaining traction in recent years (i.e., Tully et al., 2022; Valle et al., 2025). However, in defining MIL, we align with few scholars (Tully et al., 2022) and frameworks (EAVI) that consider influence of context—how environmental characteristics (social, institutional, legal, technical structures) shape individual competencies and practices. Following EAVI framework we have designed the MIL index consisting of six dimensions (value 1–100), including measurements of individual competences and environmental factors. First, we identified relevant sources of data for Serbia from reliable regular international and national surveys, databases and indexes, and then designed and conducted a survey on a national representative sample (n = 800) using CATI method. After confirming the reliability of the scales (Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.60) and creating three sub-indexes using factor analysis, survey results are combined with normalized and standardized data from external international (e.g., OECD PISA, Freedom House, Eurostat, Media Pluralism Monitor, UN E-Participation Index, IMF AI Preparedness Index, Global AI Index) and national sources (e.g., Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, GEMIUS Audience, Share Foundation Cybersecurity Monitoring). Integration of this complementary data results in the calculation of MIL index scores (1–100) for the following dimensions: 1) Connectivity and use; 2) Critical evaluation; 3) Democratic participation; 4) Media pluralism and freedom; 5) Social trust, privacy protection and cybersecurity; 6) AI readiness. After determining dimensions weight, through the two rounds of Delphi consensus expert group method (30 expert participants), Serbia scored 43.11 on the MIL index for 2025.

The final score indicates that MIL in Serbia is below mid-range, while dimensional scores provide deeper insights for researchers, policymakers and educators. The dimensions reveal underdeveloped individual capabilities compared to solid

digital infrastructure, a gap that can be explained by constraining factors in the dimensions with lower scores—media freedom and pluralism, quality of education, AI readiness. The index composition is adaptable to other countries and changes in the digital ecosystem. While the overall score enables mapping and comparison of MIL levels across countries, dimensional scores carry explanatory power.

MLC03 Mapping and Evaluating Media Literacies

PP 0429 What media literacy leaves out: A framework for evaluating Sustainability integration

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Media literacy education is widely positioned as a core democratic competence, enabling learners to navigate misinformation, participate in digital publics, and communicate responsibly. Yet sustainability—understood in the Brundtland/UN sense as an integrated agenda linking environmental limits with equity and human development—remains marginal in many mainstream media literacy curricula. Where environmental topics appear, they are often treated as discrete units rather than as cross-cutting concerns that shape how media systems, knowledge, power, and participation are understood. Responding to this gap, this paper examines how media literacy programmes conceptualise and operationalise sustainability, with specific attention to ecological worldviews, climate framing, media materiality, and justice-oriented social dimensions. We introduce the Integrated Sustainability Media Literacy Framework (ISMLF), a six-category evaluative rubric designed for systematic comparison and critical reflection across programmes. ISMLF synthesises four complementary foundations: eco-media literacy's focus on media's environmental impacts, representational politics, and material footprints (López, 2022; Maxwell and Miller, 2012); pluriversal epistemologies that contest universalising knowledge hierarchies and foreground relationality (Shiva, 1993); systems thinking and ecological literacy for analysing complexity, interdependence, and leverage points (Capra and Luisi, 2014); and UN sustainability frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The framework is applied interpretively through transparent criteria and a three-point scoring scale. Importantly, scoring across all categories uses an explicit social sustainability lens, attending to equity and inclusion, labour and livelihood conditions, and distributional impacts. Empirically, ISMLF is applied to a mixed-methods dataset comprising a content analysis of 90 lesson plans from 10 publicly accessible media literacy programmes, complemented by seven expert interviews with educators and researchers. Findings reveal a consistent imbalance: curricula frequently excel in fostering civic participation and critical inquiry, while ecological worldviews and sustained engagement with climate issues are comparatively underdeveloped and often compartmentalised. Most strikingly, the material and social costs of media infrastructures—energy use, extraction, labour conditions, and e-waste—receive limited and uneven attention, despite their centrality to sustainability. Interview data further suggests that perceived neutrality norms, organisational mandates, and resource constraints shape curricular decisions and can discourage explicit engagement with contested sustainability politics and justice implications. For the "Media Literacies and Communication Competencies" TWG, the paper offers (1) a transferable rubric for evaluating how programmes embed sustainability-relevant media competencies and (2) comparative evidence of recurring curricular blind spots, with implications for programme design, teacher education, and future research on media literacies under ecological crisis.

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MLC03 Mapping and Evaluating Media Literacies

PP 0430 Towards a multi-dimensional framework of AI literacy in higher education

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The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into higher education has re-ignited debates around the digital divide (Assefa 2025; Beckman et al. 2025) and media and information literacy. Across higher education institutions, GenAI is predominantly framed as a threat to academic integrity, prompting institutional responses that range from cautious instructional integration to restrictive, AI-proof assessment strategies. While often grounded in ethical concerns, these approaches also reflect a broader moral panic that risks obscuring the diverse and uneven ways students actually engage with GenAI tools. Current institutional and scholarly responses insufficiently capture the diversity of students' AI use. Focusing on homogeneous or purely instrumental student use, the discourse overlooks how inequalities in access, skills, confidence, and institutional support shape GenAI practices. Revisiting the digital divide in the context of GenAI

therefore calls for a more contextualized understanding of AI literacy in higher education, one that can be meaningfully adapted to diverse learning environments.

"Can it help calibrate learning to address the great differences between students across many dimensions? […] To do so will require new pedagogical approaches and changed classroom ecologies" (Kalantzis & Cope 2025: 26). Following the authors' demand and building on Kong et al. (2024), the paper proposes a multi-dimensional theoretical framework of AI literacy that situates AI engagement at the intersection of individual, institutional, and socio-political dimensions. Rather than treating AI literacy as a standalone technical competence, the framework conceptualizes it as embedded within psychological dispositions, organizational conditions, and broader cultural narratives.

At the individual level, AI literacy is shaped by personal values such as autonomy and psychological predispositions such as self-efficacy, and risk perception. These characteristics help explain why some students avoid GenAI tools due to fear of misconduct accusations or in favor of independent problem-solving. To operationalize this dimension, the framework adopts Jaakkola's (2025) distinction between personal stage, backstage, and frontstage AI use, capturing exploratory, supportive, and visible/performative forms of engagement across academic workflows.

The institutional dimension highlights how AI literacy is co-constructed through policy clarity (d'Haensens et al. 2025), teacher preparedness, and organizational culture. Educators' readiness to integrate AI meaningfully influences students' opportunities to develop reflective and ethical AI practices. Clear institutional guidelines on disclosure, plagiarism, grading, and tool use reduce uncertainty and foster equitable learning environments.

Finally, the socio-political dimension situates AI literacy within national, cultural, and economic contexts. Media discourses, political orientations toward AI industries, and dominant risk narratives shape how GenAI is perceived by students and educators. Importantly, the framework stresses the need to differentiate among GenAI tools, recognizing that varying functionalities demand distinct competencies.

Together, these three dimensions provide a comprehensive theoretical lens for understanding AI literacy as a contextual, relational, and socially embedded construct. The interplay of individual dispositions, institutional structures, and socio-political narratives offers a threefold application for literacy research, practical development, and policy. Besides a visualization of the framework, the presentation will explore its use in those areas of higher education.

MLC04 Perspectives on AI Literacy in Educational Contexts

PP 0532 Plagiarism, ethics, and creativity. Media and information literacy in young students' AI use

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The use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) by students worldwide has increased significantly. Eighty-six percent of students already use AI in their studies (DEC, 2024); however, students simultaneously demonstrate a limited understanding of how AI systems function (Azadi, T. et al., 2025). Alternatively, some university professors have begun integrating AI into classroom instruction as a tool for developing students' skills and competencies, including in Visual Art Education (Dehouche, N., & Dehouche, K., 2023); in a professional writing course (Bedington et al., 2024); and screen media education (Bender, S., & Marshall, 2023).

It is crucial to equip students with the values, knowledge, and skills necessary for the effective use of and active co-creation with AI technologies (UNESCO, 2024). Nevertheless, significant challenges remain regarding the design of learning activities for young students that foster media and information literacy, particularly given ongoing concerns related to plagiarism and ethical use of AI tools.

The primary objective of this educational intervention is to introduce students to the ethical use of generative AI and to examine students' understanding of AI when it is used in educational contexts. Multiple pedagogical approaches were implemented to support students' understanding of the ethical implications of AI use (Annapureddy et al., 2025), to foster creativity through collaboration with AI for idea generation and refinement, and to promote critical thinking skills for evaluating AI-generated content (OECD, 2025).

This paper presents three case studies conducted in 2024, including one in Portugal and two in the United States. The intervention involved three distinct groups of young students aged 17–25 (N = 63): Honors College students at a public university in the United States, journalism students at a private college in the United States, and communication/digital services students from a vocational school in Portugal. The intervention consisted of face-to-face sessions involving collaborative activities between the researcher and students, including AI image generation, search instruction, information analysis, reflective discussions, and teamwork focused on issues of plagiarism, ethics, and creative production using AI tools (e.g., Gemini, You.com, DeepAI, Claude, Jasper, Crayon, DALL·E 3, Canva, and Picsart).

A qualitative analysis was conducted using a codebook-guided approach based on the Essential Competencies of Digital and Media Literacy (Hobbs, 2010) and the AI literacy framework proposed by the OECD (2025). The analytical framework included the following dimensions: (1) access and fact-checking; (2) analyze and evaluate using critical thinking; (3) create,

compose, co-creation, generation, and creativity; (4) reflect, social responsibility, and ethical principles; and (5) act, sharing, problem-solving, and participation.

The results show that data verification, critical thinking, and analysis are clearly recognized by students as the essential skills for the use of artificial intelligence tools. However, the findings also reveal a significant gap in students' awareness and understanding of ethical issues and plagiarism related to their use of artificial intelligence. We conclude that educators at different grade levels should guide students in the responsible use of AI by encouraging reflective dialogue and structured questioning in collaborative settings. Such practices can support students' understanding of ethics, plagiarism, and meaningful co-creation with AI technologies.

MLC04 Perspectives on AI Literacy in Educational Contexts

PP 0533 Feeling, reflecting, resisting: Towards an affective–personal media literacy framework in the age of platforms

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The pervasive influence of digital media in contemporary society has led to a complex interplay between digital engagement and emotional well-being. While these platforms facilitate connection and self-expression, they also introduce various stressors that can negatively impact mental health, especially among young people. With the spread of new technologies, the development of media literacy is more important than ever before. While traditionally media literacy has emphasized access, analysis, evaluation, and production (Livingstone, 2004), growing research on digital well-being highlights that emotional experiences—such as stress, overload, guilt, anxiety, and ambivalence—are constitutive elements of everyday media use rather than secondary effects (Büchi, 2021; Vanden Abeele et al., 2024). These affective experiences are closely intertwined with platform architectures designed to maximize engagement and continuous connectivity, raising critical questions about agency, responsibility, and power (Kellner & Share, 2005; Beattie & Daubs, 2020), by understanding the technology and the functioning of platforms (Lewis, 2021; Aguaded, Civila, and Vizcaíno-Verdú 2022).

This paper presents a comprehensive framework of affective–personal media literacy that integrates affective, critical, and agentic dimensions into contemporary media literacy theory. By reflecting on the emotional ambivalences of digital connectivity (Mick & Fournier, 1998; Vanden Abeele, 2021), connecting media literacy and digital wellbeing as media platforms expand and increasingly affect people's mental health and overall well-being (Rasi et al., 2019; Büchi, 2021, Feerrar, 2022.), relying on previous concepts of affective-individual aspects of media literacy (Schorb and Theunert 2000; Niesto, 2009; Potter, 2015; Lewis, 2021), this framework conceptualizes media literacy as a process through which individuals reflect not only on media content and structures, but also on how mediated environment shape their emotions and wellbeing.

The proposed model systematically articulates four interrelated components: skills such as emotional awareness, self-regulation, reflection, and critical thinking, knowledge domains (eg. platform mechanisms, emotional and psychological effects of media use), attitudes such as agency and care for well-being), and strategies. In this context, practices and critical forms of digital disconnection (Gui et al., 2017; Syvertsen, 2020; Good & Ciccone, 2025)—are positioned as active and generative components of media literacy rather than as deficits or failures of participation.

Far from reducing digital stress to individual self-control, the framework highlights the interplay between affective experiences and platform power. By fusing platform critique with affective reflexivity, *affective–personal media literacy* offers a robust theoretical base for educational interventions that cultivate agency, emotional resilience, and sustainable digital engagement.

MLC04 Perspectives on AI Literacy in Educational Contexts

PP 0534 Intergenerational learning without reciprocity? On the limits of algorithm literacy development within families

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Algorithms have become key elements shaping users' public connection [1], in turn underscoring the need for algorithm literacy (AL) as a central component of critical media understanding. Yet public knowledge about algorithmic systems remains limited and speculative, primarily derived from personal experiences rather than explicit understanding of how algorithmic curation works [2,3]. These knowledge gaps are particularly pronounced across generations, with older adults generally showing lower levels of digital adoption and algorithm literacy than younger users [4]. Since most adults are beyond the reach of formal education, research points to informal learning environments as crucial for literacy development [5]. Families are often described as trust-based contexts for intergenerational learning, where knowledge and skills are conveyed between generations [6,7]. Accordingly, families may support AL through reciprocal exchange: younger family members contributing technical familiarity with platforms, and older members contributing critical perspectives grounded in life experience. To explore this, we asked: *How does intergenerational learning about algorithmic media unfold within families?*

We use semi-structured interviews and family technology maps to examine who provides and receives what kind of help with digital media. Interviews start with individuals identifying family members most relevant to their use of algorithmic media, who are then interviewed separately. The current sample includes a dozen families living in a large Norwegian city (data collection still ongoing).

We find that families play a central role in enabling older adults' *access* to algorithmic media, but that this role is largely instrumental, not pedagogical. A clear distinction emerges between high-stakes services such as digital ID-services and online banking, where family members are careful to ensure that systems function correctly (often acting as proxy users [8]), and social media platforms, which are treated as low-stakes entertainment. In the latter case, intergenerational support most often involves installing apps and setting up accounts. The choice of apps usually reflects preferences of younger family members acting as "warm experts" [6] since the motivation is mostly to stay connected by being on the same platform. Once an app is installed, older adults are typically left to "learn by doing," with warm experts stepping in when something goes wrong. Thus, a repair logic dominates these exchanges**.**

While families are theorized as sites of reciprocal learning, our findings point to an asymmetric, unidirectional dynamic. Younger family members underestimate older relatives' interest in deeper understanding, thus prioritizing efficiency and problem-solving over explanation. Older adults, in turn, ask narrowly framed, instrumental questions and accept partial understanding. In this sense, caregiving crowds out pedagogy.

We discuss implications for research on algorithm literacy, intergenerational learning, and informal media education.

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MLC04 Perspectives on AI Literacy in Educational Contexts

PP 0535 Student engagement with generative AI and critical thinking in higher education: Exploring competence, attitudes, and public-interest perspectives

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The widespread adoption of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming contemporary knowledge cultures, reshaping how knowledge is produced, mediated, and appropriated (Cooper et al., 2024; Granata, 2025; Levin & Minyar-Beloruchev, 2024). While technical innovation in generative AI has received growing research attention, its socio-political implications- particularly in educational contexts- remain insufficiently explored (Rong et al, 2025; Sahin & Noroozi, 2025). This project investigates how students engage with AI tools and how public-interest-oriented models of AI may foster democratic and human-centered knowledge practices beyond dominant Big Tech infrastructures (Verdegem, 2024).

Within this framework, the present study focuses on higher education as a critical site of knowledge formation. AI tools such as chatbots and generative systems have become integral to students' academic routines, supporting tasks from research and summarization to ideation and drafting. These practices raise fundamental questions: Does AI strengthen critical thinking by creating new opportunities for reflection and comparison, or does it risk eroding analytical skills through cognitive offloading? How do competence, attitudes, and usage patterns shape this dynamic?

Using a mixed-methods design, we examine the interplay between AI competence, critical thinking, attitudes toward AI, and usage frequency among German and International students. The quantitative strand (N = 70) measures critical thinking (Payan-Carreira et al., 2022), AI competence (based on Rubach & Lazarides, 2019), and attitudes toward AI (Schepman & Rodway, 2020) - capturing both opportunity-oriented and risk-oriented dimensions - alongside usage contexts. Analyses include reliability checks, descriptive statistics, correlations, and exploratory regressions to test hypotheses on competence-attitude-thinking relationships. The qualitative strand comprises 39 semi-structured interviews, analyzed via qualitative content analysis, to uncover subjective interpretations of critical thinking, perceived benefits and risks, and strategies for navigating information overload and algorithmic mediation.

Findings contribute to two debates: (1) the role of generative AI in shaping epistemic practices, and (2) practical implications for designing educational frameworks that promote responsible, human-centered AI use. Ultimately, this research situates student engagement with AI within broader socio-political concerns about participation, autonomy, and the future of knowledge production.

MLC04 Perspectives on AI Literacy in Educational Contexts

PP 0536 Shifting pedagogies: Integrating immersive media and generative AI in media studies education

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The increasing prominence of generative artificial intelligence is fundamentally reshaping the framework of communication and media studies education. Alongside the growing ease with which textual and visual content can be produced, forms of learning requiring experiential, reflective, and interpretative engagement are gaining significance. Within this transforming educational environment, immersive media may play a key role by foregrounding experiential presence.

The examination of immersive technologies within the field of communication and media education becomes justified by the technological transformation of educational environments. Due to the decreasing costs and increasing accessibility of VR headsets, AI-supported smart glasses, and 360-degree cameras, these tools can now be realistically integrated into higher education practice—not merely on an experimental basis, but also at the level of educational organization. In parallel, the emergence and rapid development of generative AI–based software has significantly lowered the technical knowledge threshold required for the production of immersive content, further strengthening the educational applicability of such technologies.

The present study introduces a two-phase educational research project, the first phase of which was conducted during the first semester of the 2025/26 academic year, involving 53 third-year undergraduate students in communication and media studies at Corvinus University of Budapest, within the framework of the course *Press Photography, Documentary and Campaign Filmmaking*. A dedicated VR session was integrated into the course, during which participants used virtual reality headsets to view a program consisting of short 360-degree documentary films and an animated work. The presented VR content addressed social, cultural, historical, and environmental themes. Following the experience, students completed a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire examined interrelated dimensions of the reception of VR documentary films, focusing on mediated communicative functioning, message interpretation, narrative guidance, and issues of authenticity and representation. From a media literacy perspective, the findings suggest that the educational significance of 360-degree films and VR-based content lies less in instrumental information transfer and more in the interpretative and reflective engagement with mediation and representation, enabling critical interpretation of mediated reality and of the communicative functioning of documentary film as a form.

The second phase of the research will be implemented during the second semester of the 2025/26 academic year. In this phase, students will design and realize their own immersive projects, building on the reception experiences acquired in the previous semester, using 360-degree cameras and generative artificial intelligence–based tools. At this stage, the course focuses on introducing the fundamental principles of virtual reality technologies, as well as their creative and communicative applications within the context of contemporary visual storytelling. Through individual and group projects, participants gain practical experience with experimental methods of creating immersive media content, while the research examines how reception experiences can be interpreted and transformed into creative and educational practices, as well as into content adaptable for science communication purposes.

CEE02 Media in the CEE Between Autocratic Attacks and Democratic Resistance

PP 0387 State captured fact-checking taking advantage of regulatory gaps in the EU platform regulation

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State-captured fact-checking organizations, which self-identify as fact-checkers while functioning as extensions of political power, pose an underexplored threat to democratic discourse in captured media environments. Fact-checking has become widespread and institutionalized in Western media systems over the past decade (Graves & Cherubini, 2016; Stencel et al., 2022), but it has been evident from the beginning that the work of fact-checkers has been characterized by different practices, approaches, and methodologies in different countries and newsrooms (Graves, 2018; Humprecht, 2020). However, in polarized media systems, fact-checking can be used not only to improve social debate but also as a political weapon, thereby further increasing polarization and reducing trust in the media. The distortion and weaponization of fact-checking have coexisted with its wider spread (Liu & Zhou, 2022; Montaña-Niño et al., 2024; Fang, 2022).

This research examines the phenomenon of state-captured fact-checking in Hungary, focusing on two platforms - Tényellenőr.hu and Faktum Projekt - that self-identify as fact-checking sites while functioning as extensions of the Fidesz government's communication apparatus. In media environments where political actors have instrumentalized the media system for their own purposes, fact-checking itself becomes a site of contestation and manipulation. The distortion of fact-checking practices represents a particularly malicious form of media capture, as these outlets exploit the legitimacy and methodological authority of legitimate fact-checking to spread partisan narratives. To analyze state-captured fact-checking practices, we employed a systematic content analysis of 90 articles published on Faktum Projekt (N = 78) and Tényellenőr.hu (N = 12) during July- September 2025. Our analysis reveals weaponized fact-checking patterns, including selective issue targeting, delegitimization of opposition sources, and institutional capture via GONGO structures.

Through operational and content analysis of the two Hungarian platforms, combined with an examination of the European Media Freedom Act and the Code of Conduct on Disinformation, this research develops a typology for identifying weaponized fact-checking while evaluating the effectiveness of existing EU regulatory frameworks in protecting media pluralism and democratic discourse from such instrumentalization. Our research aimed to assess the extent to which EU regulations, such as EMFA, cover fact-checking activities and, beyond that, whether they can serve as a solution to curb the activities of weaponized fact-checking sites. Unfortunately, the Hungarian example is not unique in Europe, therefore we believe that this phenomenon requires further academic attention.

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CEE02 Media in the CEE Between Autocratic Attacks and Democratic Resistance

PP 0388 Narratives of the past on YouTube: Automated content analysis of May 8 commemorations in Poland, Ukraine, and the Russian-speaking infospheres (2022–2025)

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The memory of the end of World War II in Europe continues to function as a powerful symbolic resource in contemporary political communication and identity construction (Etkind 2013; Hoskins 2009). This paper examines platformized political commentary on YouTube as a key component of the contemporary media infosphere in Poland, Ukraine, and among the Russian-speaking opposition in exile. Focusing on representations of May 8 between 2022 and 2025, the study explores how this date is narrated, interpreted, and mobilized across divergent political and cultural contexts during Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine.

May 8 marks the end of the war in Europe and commemorates its victims; however, across Eastern Europe it has acquired historically contingent, contested, and often antagonistic meanings (Rutten, Fedor & Zvereva 2013; Stevens 2020). These divergences have intensified in the context of the ongoing war, where historical memory operates simultaneously as an instrument of state-sponsored historical policy and as a strategic resource in Russian information warfare (Makhortykh

2017; Kulyk 2023). Competing narratives of victory, sacrifice, liberation, and occupation are mobilized to secure political legitimation, enable collective mobilization, and sustain symbolic confrontation.

While previous research in memory and media studies has primarily focused on state narratives, official commemorations, and legacy media, digital platforms now constitute hybrid communicative spaces that combine journalism, political commentary, algorithmic visibility, and participatory user practices (van Dijck, Poell & de Waal 2018). From the perspective of mediatization theory, memory in platform environments is not merely representational but also performative, affective, and interactive (Hoskins 2009). Despite extensive scholarship on memory politics in Eastern Europe, comparatively little is known about how social media platforms – particularly YouTube – shape and transform the memory of May 8 across different national and transnational media infospheres (Makhortykh 2017).

The study draws on framing theory to examine how the historical event of May 8 is structured through specific semantic, moral, and emotional frameworks (Entman 2004). Particular attention is paid to temporal orientations (past–present–future linkages), moral evaluations (sacrifice, responsibility, liberation, occupation), and affective modes of remembering. Methodologically, the paper employs automated content analysis of YouTube data, integrating the analysis of audiovisual narratives with metrics of user interaction. Two analytical dimensions are examined: (1) representations – how May 8 is narrated in video content, including dominant frames and emotional registers; and (2) interactions – how users engage with these narratives through comments, reactions, and patterns of platform engagement (Bakke, Rickard, O'Loughlin & Toal 2024).

The study addresses key research questions concerning whether Polish YouTube articulates a predominantly traumatic and reflexive mode of remembrance of May 8, whether Ukrainian platformized narratives foreground anti-war interpretations and European-oriented future imaginaries, and whether Russian-speaking opposition channels engage in the critical deconstruction of the Soviet victory cult through irony and counter-memory strategies (Etkind 2013; Kulyk 2023). Building on a comparative, platform-sensitive framework, the analysis further explores how these differing narrative orientations correspond to distinctive patterns of user interaction, engagement, and affective response on YouTube, thereby advancing understanding of the platform as a contested arena of transnational memory production.

CEE02 Media in the CEE Between Autocratic Attacks and Democratic Resistance

PP 0389 Collective memory and identity politics in the Visegrad Group: A multimodal digital humanities approach (1989–2015)

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The political trajectory of the Visegrad Group (V4) between 1989 and 2015 was characterized by the extensive instrumentalization of collective memory. While scholarship grounded in memory studies (e.g., Assmann) has analyzed these narratives, it predominantly focuses on textual semantics, often underestimating the paralinguistic dimensions of political communication. This paper addresses this limitation by proposing a multimodal framework that correlates the distant reading of parliamentary transcripts with the signal processing of speech data.

Utilizing the ParlaMint corpus as a structural index, the study implements a two-tiered analysis of parliamentary debates in Poland, Hungary, Czechia, and Slovakia. First, we apply Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) to the textual corpus to map the semantic evolution of discourse regarding transitional justice and historical trauma. This identifies the lexical clusters that constitute the explicit narrative of memory politics.

Second, the research extends the analysis to the acoustic domain. We process archival audio recordings corresponding to key legislative sessions to extract prosodic features, specifically fundamental frequency (F0) variability, jitter, and intensity dynamics. These acoustic markers serve as proxies for affective arousal, allowing for a quantitative assessment of delivery style independent of linguistic content.

Furthermore, the comparative scope of the V4 analysis highlights a critical divergence in post-socialist trajectories. While the semantic content of parliamentary debates in the early 2000s largely converged around the normative language of European integration, the spectral data indicates a latent "affective resistance" distinct to specific national contexts. In the cases of Hungary and Poland, the acoustic footprint of debates concerning national sovereignty began to exhibit high-arousal markers years before the formal consolidation of illiberal policies. This suggests that the erosion of democratic consensus was not a sudden rupture but a gradual accumulation of "affective rigidity." By tracking these sonic anomalies, the model identifies specific "patient zero" events: parliamentary sessions where the normative consensus was first breached not by logical argumentation, but by the prosodic intensity of the delivery.

The study reveals a measurable divergence between the semantic neutrality of official legislative texts and the acoustic intensity of their performance. The data indicates that the intensification of identity-based discourse is frequently preceded by statistically significant shifts in vocal prosody, suggesting that political polarization is enacted through "sonic performativity" as much as through ideological text. This paper argues that integrating spectral analysis into historical research offers a more rigorous epistemological basis for understanding the mechanics of political communication, moving beyond logocentric hermeneutics toward a multimodal analysis of historical sources.

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CEE02 Media in the CEE Between Autocratic Attacks and Democratic Resistance

PP 0390 Constructions of democracy in the Czech citizen parliament: Articulations and struggles

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Citizen parliaments or citizen assemblies are democratic tools that offer opportunities to citizens to engage in processes of increased democratic participation regarding issues of broad societal relevance (Monnot et al., 2025; OECD, 2023; Vrydagh and Welp, 2023). The citizen parliaments (CPs) facilitate democratic dialogue by carefully organising deliberations on particular societal issues, and supporting citizens to formulate resolutions that propose specific societal and policy action to address these issues to the benefit of society.

In the Czech Republic, there is no long tradition in the organisation of citizen parliaments or assemblies. The organisation of the Czech Citizen Parliament on Media and Democracy –the first in the country focussing on media and democracy–that took place during March–May 2025, provided an opportunity to Czech citizens to be part of such a democratic endeavour. Through their participation in the parliament, 20 participants shared their views, deliberated with other citizens and worked together to develop proposed solutions on how the Czech media can (be supported to) strengthen democracy in the country.

This paper presents the main findings of the analysis of the material collected from the parliament's activities and output, during its 3-month operation, addressing the following research question: How is democracy constructed through the core elements of participation and representation, in the participatory process and the outputs of the citizen parliament?

The materials collected and analysed for the purposes of this project included ethnographic fieldnote reports produced during the CP operations; CP session minutes and selected recordings; surveys and interviews addressing the parliamentarians' experiences; the proposed and accepted resolutions produced by the parliamentarians, together with the parliamentarians' dissenting and confirmatory opinions on the accepted resolutions.

The collected material was analysed following an abductive strategy (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Reichertz, 2019), maintaining an open approach to interacting with the data and coding, being still guided by key theoretical-sensitising concepts, instructed by the literature on democratic theory and civic engagement, and on democracy, media and participation (Carpentier and Wimmer, 2025; Carpentier 2016; Held, 1996).

As the analysis showed, the democratic process, as it took place within the operations of the Czech citizen parliament, was constructed through (opportunities for) enhanced and pluralist participation and representation, as deliberative, consensual and outcome-oriented, and as adhering to direct, participatory and substantive modes of democracy. The citizen parliament itself functioned as a space of enhanced participation of the involved actors, facilitating the conditions towards the equalisation of power relations. When it comes to democracy's core dimension of representation, it is considered vital, for the parliamentarians, but is important for them that it is supported by pluralism, tolerance and inclusivity. Participation is constructed as the cornerstone of a healthy democracy, when it involves the broad realm of the political and is not reduced to the field of institutionalised and formal politics.

The Czech citizen parliament highlighted the importance but also complexity of participatory processes in civic life, addressing democracy and its struggles around participation and representation as processes and products of respectful dialogue, deliberation but also compromise.

CEE02 Media in the CEE Between Autocratic Attacks and Democratic Resistance

PP 0391 Shadow infrastructures of care and resistance: Communicative aspects of activism in Wartime Russia

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This study investigates the evolving forms of civic activism in Russia in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, focusing on the communicative and logistical infrastructures that enable these practices. Drawing on several dozens of qualitative interviews conducted between 2023 and 2024 with self-identified activists and volunteers operating in major Russian cities, the research traces how politically sensitive humanitarian efforts, including assistance to Ukrainian refugees, emerged in an increasingly repressive environment.

Post-2022 Russia presents a paradox: while digital infrastructures for e-commerce and lifestyle content remain robust, the state has aggressively criminalised political expression online, blocked global platforms, and ramped up surveillance of communications. As physical public spaces for dissent have become unavailable and open protest criminalised, the internet remains one of the few remaining arenas for coordination, albeit under constant risk. In this context, humanitarian relief,

although framed by participants as “apolitical” (Bronnikova 2025) frequently operates as silent dissent (Meyer Olimpieva 2025), leveraging informal networks, encrypted messaging platforms, and peer-to-peer aid structures.

Methodologically, this study uses thematic analysis of face-to-face interviews with urban activists who at the beginning of the full-scale invasion were involved in refugee relief either in Russia or while they temporarily left the country. The interviews reveal the importance of communicative ecologies, i.e. blending traditional technologies like landlines and face-to-face networks with tools such as Telegram, Notion, and OVD-Info bot. The paper also shows how domestic spaces (e.g., kitchens, apartments) become key sites of logistical coordination, while activists with previous communication and management skills become the main nodes in the activist communication ecologies, no matter what type of activism or profession they were involved prior to the war. These findings reflect the hybrid nature of civic action in authoritarian contexts, where physical and digital infrastructures are precariously intertwined and rapidly adapted in response to shifting conditions. The paper also highlights the transborder dimensions of war-time activism: Ukrainian refugees were moved from occupied zones to Europe via Russia, relying on detailed, often informal knowledge of border regimes. Meanwhile, displaced Russians reconstructed activist networks abroad through diasporic ties, relying heavily on trust, affect, and improvisation, forming what we call shadow infrastructures of care, held together not by hierarchy, but by emotional investment and interpersonal credibility.

By focusing on the intersection of repression, infrastructural fragility, and everyday resistance, this paper contributes to broader conversations about civil society under authoritarianism, and the transformation of activist practices in the digital age. It challenges the assumption that repression extinguishes activism in Russia, showing instead how civic engagement mutates under pressure taking on new forms to survive in the times of crisis.

WON01 Representation, Female Journalists in the Newsroom and in Confict Settings

PP 0616 The daily struggle of female journalists in the news media

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In 2021 the share of women was 86% in journalism and information related university studies in Europe.[1] By that time women comprised almost 62% of bachelor's-degree, more than 65% of master's-degree, and more than 58% of doctoral-degree candidates in journalism and mass communication studies in the United States, according to the report of the Women's Media Center.[2] Despite these numbers, the report of the 7th Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) – published in 2025 – mentions that four out of ten stories in traditional news media are reported by women globally, with only 41% of journalists named in news articles, seen or heard in multimedia clips are women.[3] In Hungary this number was even lower in 2022: women authored only 25% of articles published on the the most popular and cited news platforms (Shevchuk, 2022).

During my research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with female journalists working in the news media. My interviews focused primarily on two research questions. The first was does the gender of the journalist still matter in the news media? And the second was whether journalism has remained a male-dominated profession, requiring masculine qualities and characteristics to pursue.

One of the major findings of my research is that journalism is no longer necessarily considered a masculine, much more gender neutral profession, but my interviewees confirmed that masculine traits are necessary to pursue it. According to the interviews, hard news mainly covered by men, and experts also prefer to talk with male journalists, so glass walls still exist. They also confirmed that the glass ceiling exists too, with many feeling that they have reached the peak of their careers despite having the ability to attain higher positions.

The interviewed journalists confirmed my further previous assumptions: there are fewer women compared to men in the media sector, particularly in newsrooms that set the agenda and deal with news media; journalism as a profession is considered masculine according to social norms, and even female journalists must adopt masculine traits in order to succeed, thereby jeopardizing their femininity and womanhood; based on female journalists' individual information about the media industry, this masculine atmosphere directly rejects traditional female roles and feminine appearances; there are many forms of discrimination, but the most common ones come from within the editorial office, from sources an interviewees in everyday work, and from reader feedbacks.

To conclude, based on international literature and my research, female journalists struggle daily for recognition and acceptance.

1. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/w/ddn-20230703-1
2. https://womensmediacenter.com/reports/the-status-of-women-in-the-u-s-media-2021-1
3. https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GMMP-2020.Highlights_FINAL.pdf

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WON01 Representation, Female Journalists in the Newsroom and in Confict Settings

PP 0617 Seeing the invisible: How news media frame unpaid care work in Germany, Austria and German-speaking Switzerland (2020–2024)

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Unpaid work affects everyone. Over the life course, individuals either benefit from unpaid labour or perform it themselves, for children, relatives or through voluntary engagement. Domestic, care and volunteer work accounts for an estimated one third of the social product of advanced industrialised nations. In Austria, the monetary value of unpaid work in 2022 was calculated at EUR 195 billion (44% of GDP). Despite its central economic contribution, much of this work remains invisible and undervalued.

Unpaid labour is predominantly performed by women. A 2022 EIGE survey of 60,000 respondents found that "56% of mothers with children under twelve spend at least five hours per day on childcare, compared to 26% of fathers". COVID-19 widened this gap: in Germany, women's unpaid informal care increased by 1.1 billion hours between 2020 and 2021 – roughly 700,000 part-time jobs. These patterns reinforce structural disadvantages, including lower employment levels, earnings, pensions and reduced access to leadership.

Demographic ageing is likely to heighten pressure on unpaid care. Responsibilities increasingly converge in the same life stages. Simultaneously, labour-market actors in Germany are responding to skilled-labour shortages by calling for higher weekly working hours for all genders – intensifying tensions between paid and unpaid work.

Despite temporary attention during the pandemic, sustainable solutions are lacking. Research on unpaid care remains fragmented due to overlapping concepts (Gender Care Gap, Pay Gap, Pension Gap) and disciplinary dispersion. Communication scholarship has expanded analyses of gendered visibility, yet few studies examine how unpaid labour itself is represented in news.

This study fills this gap by analysing how unpaid work is represented in news coverage in Austria, Germany and German-speaking Switzerland, and how the pandemic shaped these representations. It examines which forms of unpaid labour receive attention, which actors dominate and whether episodic or thematic framing prevails.

We analyse six quality newspapers (two per country) between 2020 and 2024. To ensure reproducibility, the study focuses on print coverage and employs a full sample identified through a comprehensive LexisNexis search. The dataset contains 491 articles, evenly distributed across countries; intercoder reliability reached 0.81 (Gwet's AC1).

Preliminary findings reveal predominantly event-driven reporting (68%), with strong opinion-section emphasis (40%). Unpaid work is the primary topic in only 36% of articles; more often it appears as an illustrative or causal factor within broader discussions on gender inequality. Coverage concentrates on childcare and household tasks, while elder care or volunteering appear less frequently, resulting in a partial depiction of unpaid labour. Women are overwhelmingly portrayed as primary actors (92%), supported by statistical evidence (54%), while personal narratives remain limited (23%). Articles and passages with a primary focus on unpaid work display thematic framing centred on structural causes and solutions; while consequences include personal ones such as stress and systemic ones such as labour-market impacts. Finally, the discourse appears largely "by and with women": 70% of authors and 60% of quoted actors are female.

The study is ongoing and will include a cross-national comparison. A supplementary online sample for Germany (≈170 articles) will analyse digital outlets and compare agenda dynamics.

WON01 Representation, Female Journalists in the Newsroom and in Confict Settings

PP 0618 Spotlight and shadows: Women's agency and representation in wartime media

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Women's needs in media discourse are predominantly framed through negative or crisis-driven narratives- violence, loss, and humanitarian catastrophe- which reinforces objectification and limits the integration of women's experiences into policymaking and public dialogue. The discourse of needs rarely evolves into a discourse of agency, leaving women as objects rather than active subjects. War exacerbates structural inequalities: hyper-stereotyped portrayals of women combine with limited access to decision-making and public expertise.

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating peace and conflict studies, media studies, feminist theory, pragmatics, and social anthropology. Peacebuilding frameworks (J. Galtung, 1969; J. P. Lederach, 1997) emphasize communication as a tool to mitigate violence and foster sustainable peace, while mediatization and audience studies (S. Hjarvard, 2008; A. Hepp, 2013; N. Couldry, 2003) show how media logic shapes social processes. Feminist media theory (J. Butler, 1990, 2004; D. Haraway, 1985, 1991; J. Radloff, 2017; A. S. Dobson, 2015) analyzes gendered representation, embodiment, and agency. Given their Western origins, these frameworks require adaptation to Ukraine's wartime context, accounting for trauma, power asymmetries, postcolonial legacies, and conflict-driven media realities.

War and media are interdependent situations: media both reflect and shape wartime contexts, influencing which voices are heard and how social roles are constructed. Using F. Krotz's mediatization framework (F. Krotz, 2007, 2014), this study examines how media structures transform social practices and women's visibility, showing that even highly active participation can coexist with systemic inequalities. Hyper-stereotypization amplifies this paradox: women are visible and articulate, yet their agency is constrained by the very media that presents them.

The repertoire of women's voices was examined through CAT-UA monitoring of social media, using a dataset of approximately 1 million posts collected via Youscan since 24 February 2022. A thematic sample of 159,000 posts was analyzed with partial content and multimodal discursive analysis. Focus groups with women remaining in Ukraine, internally displaced women, and those who fled abroad further clarified communicative dynamics and silences.

Analysis shows that women - from victims and volunteers to leaders and activists - are key carriers of humanitarian and peace-oriented narratives, articulating recovery, care, solidarity, and social cohesion. Yet institutional media often reproduce hierarchical communication models, limiting women's participation in meaning-making. Visibility is frequently reduced to victims, caretakers, symbols of resilience, or moral pillars, reinforcing power asymmetries and the perception of women's "natural" secondary status.

These findings highlight the urgent need for alternative media models that transform visibility into agency. Democratization of media, regulation of digital platforms and AI, and support for women's solidarity networks can counter hyper-stereotypization, fostering inclusive, ethical, and participatory discourse capable of advancing peace even under wartime conditions.

WON01 Representation, Female Journalists in the Newsroom and in Confict Settings

PP 0619 Doxxing as activism: Gendered practices of visual digital vigilantism

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Visual forms of online misogyny have been subject to much debate in recent years. We have previously defined these as the ways in which social media platforms afford, limit, or shape particular gendered power relations through the visualities and visual cultures they produce and/or facilitate (anonymised, in press; anonymised, 2024). This article first reviews cases of gendered digital vigilantism discussed in legacy and independent media coverage towards identifying repertoires of gendered vigilantism and creating a conceptual framework of these practices. The framework illustrates the different ways in which digilantism preys on and exploits women's, queer, and non-binary individuals' digital data under the banner of producing "social good". This means that digilantism assumes a role of social justice and collective defence of public good, even where privacy rights are breached. Individuals who may have broken the "moral codes" of a given group (but not laws) consequently face digital public persecution and hate. As part of the framework, we pay particular attention to the use of visual data as ways of identifying, shaming, and controlling women, queer, and non-binary persons. We then provide in-depth insights into a particular case of visual digilantism. This case draws a connection between digitally mediated harassment and activist rhetorics by looking at a case study of a sexual harassment accusation by a digital vigilante group, which was interpreted in different ways by the involved and/or observing parties (the target, the accusers, bystanders, and the platforms) as either harassment/doxxing or activism. This event is an example of the culture of everyday surveillance (Lyon, 2018) and constitutes a case of digital vigilantism or 'vigitilantism' (Reichl, 2019) with, due to its hateful rhetorics, ambiguous interpretations as either (a) a form of activism or sousveillance, or (b) the wider spectrum of harassment, bullying, and doxxing, that carry potential for significant consequences of the involved individuals' everyday life and may be misinterpreted by content moderators and content creators alike. The article highlights above all the visual cues and aesthetics that were used in this case towards outlining the rhetoric and affective impact of implicit visual narratives. The article ends by highlighting feminist practices of care and support to counteract digital vigilantism that have been developed by activist groups working on the ground in the area of online sexual violence.

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POS01 Poster session

P01 ARS Cognitive limits of attention and comprehension in high-speed advertising

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The pervasive practice of speed-watching, driven by information overload and digital immediacy, has redefined audiovisual consumption among young audiences. While this strategy prioritizes time efficiency, questions remain about the real impact that such compression has on the cognitive processing of persuasive communication.

In this context, the present ongoing research--part of the second year of doctoral studies in Audiovisual Communication at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) of the first author and conducted in collaboration with the Spanish Public Television (RTVE) Institute-- poses the following central question: How do attentional processing, comprehension, and emotional perception vary when advertisements are viewed at normal speed (1×) versus accelerated speed (2×)?

Through a mixed-method experimental design, participants (N = 172) aged between 18 and 63 years were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: half were exposed to advertising stimuli at 1× speed, and the other half at 2× speed. Six video advertisements were selected, each lasting 15–30 seconds, with limited on-screen text and clearly visible branding. For each video, two versions were prepared: the original normal-speed version (1×) and an accelerated version (2×). The videos were sourced from YouTube in 1080p HD resolution and presented in a randomized order. The methodology integrates biometric data collection via eye-tracking technology to obtain objective metrics of attention through eye behavior, complemented by self-report questionnaires that assess information retention, affective response, including valence and arousal, and comprehension and credibility.

Data collection and preliminary processing are complete; full statistical analysis is ongoing and will be presented at the conference. This work aims to provide empirical evidence within an emerging line of research by examining how the acceleration of stimuli modulates cognitive resources and whether the potential increase in attentional demand associated with the 2× format compromises communicative effectiveness. Beyond its theoretical contribution, this research seeks to inform evidence-based decision-making in advertising production and broadcasting by clarifying the cognitive and communicative effects of accelerated content formats.

POS01 Poster session

P02 CYM Peer-to-peer exploratory workshop as an empowering method in participatory youth research

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The poster proposal is part of my PhD project titled: “Human rights-based approach to critical media literacy: Youth perspectives on human rights in the digital environment.” For the poster session, I am focusing on one of the sub-research questions, which is well-suited for the session as it is exploratory in design and would benefit greatly from collegial feedback and discussion: “How do youth in Europe experience human rights (issues) in the digital environment?”

To address this research question, I designed a peer-to-peer exploratory workshop and engaged with youth from a European Youth Network.

The workshop has already been conducted in October 2025, with participation of 15 youth aged between 18–24, after piloting different components of the workshop with three different youth groups (each n = 12–15) and finalising it based on structured interviews conducted with youth (n = 3). The workshop uses peer education approach, following the art-based inquiry (Greenwood, 2012) and designed as low-threshold to stimulate a dialogue oriented learning environment. During the workshop, youth engaged in activities that allowed them to reflect on their experiences on the digital environment in relation to the human rights (issues). The method strongly values youth perspectives and their narrated/visualised expressions as valid empirical data (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). By doing so, a focus has been given on experiences of (non-) participation vis-à-vis human rights and how youth reflect on the barriers and violations to human rights as well as opportunities emerging from exercise of rights in the digital environment. The workshop design as well as the analysis has been informed by three theories a) Critical media literacy (CML) theory by Kellner and Share (2019); b) Ideal requirements for public sphere framework by Dahlberg (2001), which derives from Jürgen Habermas’ theory (1962; 2023); and b) digital citizenship framework by Choi (2016).

The outputs/materials created during workshop (e.g posters, note cards drafted in activities and mapping exercise) as well as researcher’s field notes are considered as “data.” The data gathered from the workshop has currently been analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Interested participants from the workshop are involved in research and formed “youth expert group”.

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POS01 Poster session

P03 CYM Influencer marketing and Gen Z perceptions of Chinese e-commerce controversies: Shein and Temu in Spain

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Despite ongoing controversies related to labour conditions, environmental sustainability and ethical practices, Chinese fast-fashion e-commerce platforms such as Shein and Temu continue to achieve high sales in European markets. This paradox is particularly evident among Generation Z consumers, who are often described as environmentally and ethically conscious, yet remain highly engaged with these brands. This study explores how influencer marketing on social media contributes to this contradiction in the Spanish context.

Focusing on Gen Z users aged 16–31, the research examines the psychological and communicative mechanisms through which influencers mediate perceptions of brand controversy and consumption practices. The study addresses three research questions: (1) how do Shein and Temu understand and manage controversy through influencer collaborations; (2) what types of influencer content dominate brand-related communication on TikTok; and (3) how do Gen Z consumers negotiate personal values with their actual purchasing behaviours.

The project adopts a qualitative multi-method approach. First, a semi-structured in-depth interview with internal staff who has worked with Shein and Temu has been conducted and is currently being analyzed using thematic analysis. Second, a content analysis of fashion-related TikTok videos posted during the 2025 Black Friday period and tagging the official Spanish brand accounts is underway, using a coding framework informed by Taylor's Six-Segment Strategy Wheel and narrative persuasion theory. I now have a draft codebook and have downloaded almost all of the videos. Finally, focus groups with Spanish Gen Z participants will examine value orientations, awareness of brand controversies and the perceived influence of influencers on shopping decisions.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute academically to a deeper understanding of parasocial interactions between followers and influencers by incorporating a practice-oriented perspective grounded in industry professionals' insights. Unlike much previous research, which has primarily relied on hypothetical scenarios or imagined interactions, this study draws on real-world marketing practices and professional experiences. From a practical perspective, the results also offer insights into the actual market positioning of these brands and clarify how their often-described "addictive" marketing strategies are translated into sustained commercial success.

POS01 Poster session

P04 CYM The digital privacy gap: How adolescents and their parents understand online privacy boundaries

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Online activities are a routine part of adolescents' increasingly autonomous social lives but also a source of concerns for parents. This raises questions about which online experiences adolescents consider private versus those they are willing to share with parents. Social-cognitive domain theory (Smetana et al., 2009) provides a framework for understanding why adolescents consider certain activities personal, prudential, moral or multifaceted. In this theory, online activities were framed as multifaceted, thus viewed as a single domain. More recent works, however, argue that research should distinguish between different online social activities rather than consider online behaviour as homogenous (Van Zalk & Van Zalk, 2020). Nevertheless, empirical knowledge of how online privacy is perceived within families remains limited. Online interactions may blur the boundaries between adolescents' personal domain and parental authority. The same online activities may be perceived by adolescents as private and by parents as safety or prudential concerns, creating new sources of conflict. This study addresses this gap by investigating how early adolescents and their parents understand the privacy of various online social activities. It aims to explore the boundary between adolescents' right to privacy and parents' right to know, deepening our understanding of the social digital media use domains that adolescents and their parents perceive as private or routine, as well as those that may give rise to disagreements or conflicts. In this study, we collected data from 1,562 parent-child dyads, adolescents aged 11–14 (M = 12.51, SD = 1.13, 51.4 % boys) in May 2025. Both parents and children were asked two open-ended questions to describe the online content and online conversations they consider private, as well as those they believe parents should know about, including what it involves and why they draw these boundaries. We are analyzing their 5,304 answers using Structural Tabular Thematic Analysis (ST-TA; Robinson, 2022). We are currently beginning the first stage of ST-TA, involving deep immersion in the data. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of family privacy negotiation, enriching the Social-cognitive domain theory in the context of digital media and offering insights for both theory and parental mediation practice.

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POS01 Poster session

P05 CDE Ethical imperatives and structural dynamics in AI and disinformation regulation: Insights from Austrian Civil Society

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Austria's hybrid media environment (Chadwick, 2017) faces mounting pressures that erode journalistic autonomy and democratic deliberation (Vinatzer et al., 2024). Distinguishing from mis- and disinformation remains difficult (Farid, 2022), intensified by AI-driven amplification of deceptive content (Bontridder & Poullet, 2021). Regulatory frameworks struggle to keep pace (European Commission, 2025), threatening deliberative discourse (Riedl, 2024).

Building on dialogic communication ethics, this study conceptualises communication as a relational and moral process grounded in dialogue (Anderson et al., 1994; Johannesen et al., 2008). Concepts of the attention economy (Davenport & Beck, 2001; Webster, 2014; Klinger & Svensson, 2016) guide the analysis of power shifts, representation gaps and governance in public discourse, leading to the research questions:

How does Austrian civil society assess the ethical imperative of regulating AI and countering mis- and disinformation within the EU governance framework?

What role do socio-economic asymmetries and political dependencies play in shaping the implementation of regulatory frameworks for AI and the governance of mis- and disinformation?

Method

This study employs a qualitative design based on 13 focus groups conducted to date, involving 80 participants, most within a Horizon Europe project. Additional groups will follow to strengthen depth and robustness. Discussions addressed contentious issues such as AI, misinformation, scientific scepticism, elections and diversity in a multi-actor setting that included

underrepresented groups and institutional representatives. Data were analysed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using MAXQDA to examine social meaning and media representation, highlighting the interplay between individual experiences and structural conditions.

Results

Preliminary results indicate a consensus on coordinated regulatory responses that go beyond technical fixes to include societal and ethical considerations. Elite-driven AI discourses, weak enforcement and algorithmic opacity were identified as amplifying systemic risks, reinforcing calls to safeguard accountability and democratic resilience. Participants warned that increasing polarisation displaces evidence-based reasoning with emotionalised narratives, fostering communicative restraint on controversial issues and limiting fact-based dialogue. The absence of legal enforcement creates a regulatory gap, compounded by AI's influence on public perception. Civil society emphasised polarised narratives oscillating between extremes and called for coordinated efforts, including fact-checking mechanisms, to counter misinformation within shared EU digital policy frameworks.

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POS01 Poster session

P06 CDE The communicative construction of competing futures and contemporary practices of mobilisation

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Media change and long-term societal transformations can be analyzed not only retrospectively but also with a focus on potential futures and their shaping. In times of multiple crises, questions about the future become central to individual and collective orientation, providing frameworks to process uncertainty and define societal goals (Cantó-Milà & Seebach, 2024). These negotiations also reveal present action possibilities – either to promote desired futures or counteract negative developments. Such "anticipated futures" influence perception, evaluation, and decision-making even before they materialize (Anderson, 2010). Future-oriented practices serve as effective mobilization tools for various groups, grounded in shared ideas, common norms and mechanisms of governance (Kashima et al., 2025). At the same time, differentiated and often competing ideas emerge about what constitutes a crisis and how it should be addressed (Mau et al., 2024).

This dissertation, currently in its early stages, examines competing visions following a potential collapse of the current social order, as well as strategies to avert, accelerate, or prepare for it and analyzes how different actors – from alternative communities to state institutions – use the future to create orientation, capacity for action, and community. Three empirical cases from Germany will be analyzed: a) the Bundeswehr as a state actor, b) the Reichsbürger milieu as anti-state actors, and c) the prepping milieu as largely non-political, individualistic actors. Using a qualitative content analysis of their online communication, the study will investigate which futures are interpreted by whom, how they relate to the present, and which communicative resources and public arenas are available to each group. Central research questions include: How is the future socially constructed and related to present action? How are futures communicated, legitimized as knowledge, and translated into action-guiding orientations? How do collective visions foster belonging, community, and identity, and what role does (online) communication play in their dissemination and stabilization?

The dissertation contributes to the understanding of contemporary processes of social fragmentation during times of multiple crises by comparatively examining the future as a communicative space for social and political negotiation and mobilization.

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POS01 Poster session

P07 CDE Look Who's Talking! In/visibilities of impacted communities in news reporting on AI

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News reporting brings light to topics, perspectives, and current events on both a local and global scale, aiding in the formation of public opinion and empowering readers to be informed citizens. Multiple factors impact which voices and stories are made in/visible in news media, including journalists' individual decisions (Haarkötter & Kalmuk, 2023), journalistic norms (O'Neill & Harcup, 2019; Trilling et al., 2017), media ownership (Archer & Clinton, 2018; Chomsky, 2006) and the outlet's ideological and political leanings (Firmstone, 2024).

Larger cultural and societal processes such as marginalization further impact who is made in/visible and, in turn, is forced to make additional efforts to make their voices heard (Strand, 2018). Communities disadvantaged by these processes are especially impacted by AI risks that reproduce and amplify pre-existing inequalities, including environmental harms (Bender et al., 2021; Li et al., 2025), gender-based violence (Ji, 2025) and socioeconomic disparity (Sahebi & Formosa, 2024). With the rise of widely used generative AI technologies and their increased infrastructural and resource demands, impacted communities worldwide have taken to engaging in various forms of resistance. This includes the establishment of dedicated non-profit institutes and organizations- for example, the Distributed AI Research Institute and PauseAI (DAIR Institute, 2025; PauseAI, 2025)- and the grassroots coordination of protests and lobby work opposing the building of energy-intensive data centers (Levy, 2026).

Voices amplified in news reporting on AI shape expectations, understandings and awareness of its risks and benefits (Dihal, 2024). The visibility of these impacted communities and their demands in news reporting thus provides an important counterweight to techno-optimist and solutionist narratives emphasized by tech CEOs and investors profiting off the widespread implementation of AI technologies (Danaher, 2021; Johnston, 2020).

This cumulative dissertation asks: Which communities are made in/visible in English- and German-language news reporting on artificial intelligence? It utilizes a mixed-methods approach using multiple semi-automated large-scale content analyses of news articles on AI from Austria, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, alongside supplementary text data from social media and communities impacted by AI technologies.

The dissertation is currently in the state of registration.

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POS01 Poster session

P08 CDE Woman's emancipation in the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD) and within the party press, 1917–1923

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When the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (German: Unabhängige Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, USPD) was founded in 1917 as a split from the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), female members hoped that they would now be taken more seriously. Leading politician Luise Zietz, for instance, hoped "that women's demands are now viewed differently than in the old party" (Zietz, 1917, 32). This hope was widely shared: in March 1919, female members accounted for approximately 25% of the total membership (Krause, 2025, 29). What is more, Clara Zetkin, the leading figure of the proletarian women's movement, also joined the USPD, which resulted in her dismissal as editor of the SPD-owned periodical *Die Gleichheit*, which was the movement's most important organ. The party split was played out extensively in the press (and as a battle for control of various publications), as it was considered crucial to the success of the labor movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The PhD project examines the negotiation of the so-called "Frauenfrage" (women's issue) in the USPD's media policy. It focuses on opportunities for women to participate in the party press and the presence of women's political issues. Particular attention is paid to the quantitatively marginal women's press. Theory and practice of women's agitation and organization in the USPD are examined to shed light on the party's women's press between marginalization and self-empowerment. It examines the tensions between goals of women's emancipation and anti-feminist tendencies in the party and discusses these as a societal issue, going beyond the historical example.

The main research question is: How was the "Frauenfrage" reflected in the media policy and media practice of the USPD? Following sub-questions are: How were the functions and necessities of a (partial) separation of women in the party and its press discussed? What impact did this have on the content of various press organs? Who wrote in women's press organs and where did women write?

The project uses the method of historical source analysis. Sources used for the study include party conference minutes, programmatic writings, archive holdings such as personal estates, and USPD press publications.

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POS01 Poster session

P09 CLP ComAI Provider's Governance of User-Chatbot Relationships

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Providers of digital services have historically acted as central points of control and regulation over the use of their products. This includes rules on the content hosted on the service which is commonly referred to as 'content moderation' (Gillespie, 2018). Research on content moderation generally spans three categories: (1) which rules providers set in their corporate

policies, such as Terms of Service (e.g. Einwiller & Kim, 2020), (2) how they implement these rules (e.g. De Keulenaar et al., 2023) and (3) how the enactment is perceived by users (e.g. Bucher, 2017).

While there is a considerable body of research with regards to social media platforms, little is known about how providers of Artificial Intelligence (AI) related products exercise content moderation, specifically those that offer Communicative Artificial Intelligence (ComAI), such as chatbots (Hepp et al., 2023). Initial research suggests that, although ComAI providers' content moderation themes appear similar to those of social media platforms (e.g. misinformation, harassment), new topics are emerging, especially due to the nature of direct interactions between users and chatbots (Gillespie, 2018; Klyman, 2025).

Thus, in my PhD thesis, I want to address the following research questions:

(1) Which rules do ComAI providers set to moderate the content they host, especially with regard to the nature of direct interactions between users and chatbots?
(2) How are these rules enacted?
(3) How is the enactment perceived by users?

My thesis comprises four interconnected studies. In all studies, I will focus on four ComAI providers, namely Anthropic, OpenAI, Google and Meta AI. The first study will provide an overview of the key themes of content moderation in the corporate policies of ComAI providers, while the second study will be an in-depth analysis of how they conceptualize user-chatbot-interactions. Studies three and four will examine content moderation in practice. The third study will examine how content moderation guidelines manifest in user-chatbot-interactions, and the fourth study will explore users' perceptions of providers' content moderation practices.

I am currently in the process of conducting the first study. By September 2026, I plan to have finished this study and started work on study two.

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POS01 Poster session

P10 DMM News from the Portuguese diaspora: Understanding diasporic news websites in France, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom

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Diasporic media produced by Portuguese immigrants have been studied in regards to its characteristics and functions, revealing their role in promoting cultural identity, ties between the community, a bond with the country of origin, as well as the integration of the community in the country of destination (Ferreira, 2014; Ferreira, 2016; Rosales & Ferreira, 2010; Moura, 2010; Pena-Rodríguez & Lima, 2020).

Nevertheless, while Portuguese diaspora media - particularly printed newspapers, radio, and television - have been researched, little is known about the adaptation of these media to the digital environment, specifically in terms of the production and consumption of news websites created by and/or for the Portuguese immigrant communities.

This PhD project addresses this research gap by examining three news websites serving Portuguese immigrant communities in three destination countries of both historic and contemporary relevance for Portuguese migration: As Notícias (United Kingdom), LusoJornal (France) and Contacto (Luxembourg).

Using a mixed-methods approach that combines content analysis, ethnographic observation, interviews and surveys, the study will examine: the role of Portuguese diasporic news websites in the political, identity and cultural representation of Portuguese immigrants; levels of journalistic professionalization; production processes and thematic agendas in the websites' contents; the relevance of these websites for the community from the perspectives of both news professionals and

readers; readers' profiles and motivations for accessing these platforms; and the funding strategies and business models adopted by these news organizations. This study is currently in progress, with data collection set to begin in early 2026.

The findings aim to further knowledge about Portuguese diaspora journalism in the digital context and to provide a foundation for future research on news websites produced by and/or for Portuguese communities across different destination countries.

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POS01 Poster session

P11 DMM "This affects me, this hurts me!" News reception and social participation of Persons with migration background in Germany

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The growing phenomenon of news avoidance is receiving increasing attention. Some news avoiders feel that news does not directly affect them (Palmer & Toff, 2020). This raises the question of how news reception is influenced when news discusses one's own identity and therewith future. Focusing on people with a Migration background it is striking that media coverage of migrants is predominantly linked to crimes or conflicts—disproportionate to their actual prevalence (Gemi et al., 2013)—and is accompanied by negative media reactions (Bonfadelli, 2019; Toff et al., 2023).

Since media clichés in particular influence the recipient's news selection (Arendt, 2023), research debates the relation between the negative generalization of migrants in the media with negative effects on their socialization and sense of national belonging in Germany. The aim of the dissertation project is therefore to understand news reception and avoidance among people with a migration background as well as to their news consumption behavior regarding migration-related reporting in Germany.

There were 4 basic requirements for participants to achieve a sample group outwardly associated with a similar life and religious context: (1) a migration background, (2) a non-European country of origin, (3) with predominantly Muslim population, and (4) sufficient German language skills. Due to the declining relevance of inner European nationalities (Thränhardt, 2008), research explicitly focuses on non-European, as Muslim perceived backgrounds (Hafez & Schmidt, 2015) and participants were from the ten most frequent Muslim countries of origin in Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2024).

Interviewees were recruited through associations and non-institutional groups, private contacts, requests in public spaces and online. Data was collected through 22 qualitative, semi-structured interviews. These interviews covered topics such as news consumption habits, topic-(dis)interest, social participation and (national) affiliation(s), media perception, and migration-related news.

The evaluation of the interviews is still *work in progress*. However, first results show this not only allows insights into the subjective worlds of meaning of a steadily growing population group in Germany, but has implications for the news processing practices of journalists and offers a prognosis for social cohesion and feelings of belonging. Therefore this study thus contributes to a rather unexplored intersection between migration and communication studies.

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POS01 Poster session

P12 DCC Shifting paths: How the sequencing of product decisions communicates institutional direction in early stage media platforms

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Early stage media platforms operate under conditions of uncertainty in which institutional identity, legitimacy and future direction are not yet stabilised. Existing research in platform studies has examined design choices, governance mechanisms, and business models as organisational features shaping digital platforms. However, less attention has been paid to how the temporal sequencing of decisions shapes how platforms are interpreted as evolving institutions. This poster asks, how does the order in which product, governance, and communication decisions are introduced influence interpretations of what a platform is and what it is becoming?

The poster presents work in progress from an analytic autoethnographic case study of Oriire, an early stage, mission-driven digital archive of African mythology and folklore. The study forms part of a broader doctoral project currently in its first-wave analytic phase. Methodologically, it draws on constructivist grounded theory principles and examines longitudinal documentation of product changes, governance interventions, and public-facing communications. Materials include interface redesigns, editorial standardisation, membership systems, privacy and consent flows, and crisis communications during infrastructural strain. The analysis examines the founder's reflective documentation alongside observable platform changes to trace how sequencing decisions shaped the platform's emerging institutional identity.

Preliminary findings suggest sequencing matters interpretively, not only substantively. Decisions introduced early in a platform's lifecycle appear to carry disproportionate weight in shaping how subsequent actions are understood. For example, early implementation of GDPR-style consent mechanisms communicated procedural seriousness and institutional aspiration prior to formalisation of editorial or monetisation structures. By contrast, governance and monetisation decisions introduced after growth were interpreted through established expectations, narrowing plausible future paths. Across these moments, sequencing appears to operate as implicit communication signaling priorities, values and imagined futures.

Aligned with the conference theme, the poster conceptualises early stage platforms as operating at moments of path dependency, where each decision contributes to expanding or constraining possible institutional futures. Rather than proposing a settled framework, the poster advances temporal sequencing as a sensitising concept for analysing how institutional meaning and legitimacy emerge over time. The analysis invites comparative research across niche and mission driven platforms to examine how sequencing practices shape trust, resilience, and organisational trajectories.

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POS01 Poster session

P13 FIS Women documentary filmmakers' ethical reasoning: "No film is important enough to hurt someone"

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This qualitative research focuses on documentary filmmaking ethics with special emphasis on women directors. How do they decide when facing a moral dilemma? Who comes first – the film or the participants? While prior research suggests that documentary filmmakers give their films a more prominent place (Sanders, 2012), our data indicate that among women documentary directors, the answer is more complicated. The findings have so far shown that making a good film is crucial for them, but not at the expense of harming people or damaging relationships.

The poster will present the results of the study as the first outcome of the ongoing qualitative research based on the grounded theory approach. Using in-depth interviews and grounded theory analysis, the study examines the ethical dilemmas Slovak and Czech women documentary filmmakers, focusing on feminist issues (N = 12), face, the solutions they employ, and the values they prioritise within five key relationships stemmed from previous research and theory (Sanders, 2010; Aufderheide, 2012): with protagonists, the industry, the crew, the audience, and their own film. Particular attention is paid to how they narrate power asymmetries, responsibility, and vulnerability.

The analysis indicates that their moral reasoning differs from the dominant understanding of documentary ethics shaped by a Western, white, male perspective in film theory (Pryluck, 1976; Nichols, 1991), which remains a normative imperative for examining ethics in documentary film even today, as our recent scoping review – on research within documentary filmmaking ethics – showed. The respondents' reasoning and values resonate more strongly with the ethics of care, as developed by Carol Gilligan (1993).

At the same time, the position of women filmmakers within the Czech and Slovak documentary film industry is more unstable, requiring them to repeatedly defend both the relevance of female-centred topics and their own ability to tell these stories in the way they find important. By foregrounding women's voices, the study seeks to reframe documentary ethics beyond its masculinized foundations, connect debates on the ethics of care with discussions of authorship and power in non-fiction cinema, and open a more inclusive debate on ethics and gender in documentary film.

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POS01 Poster session

P14 GSC From Digital Intimacy to Digital Violence: Revenge Pornography and Mental Health in LGBTIQ+ People

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Revenge pornography, the nonconsensual distribution and sharing of sexually intimate content to third parties via digital technologies, has emerged as a prevalent form of online sexual violence. Psychological impacts of revenge porn include negative effects on short- and long-term mental health, and are comparable to rape and sexual harassment.

While research has documented these consequences in heterosexual women, LGBTIQ+ individuals remain understudied, despite facing elevated risks and unique vulnerabilities related to minority stress, marginalisation, and barriers to help-seeking. Unlike heterosexuals, LGBTIQ+ people are also at risk of having their gender identity or sexual orientation revealed without their permission, carrying significant stress and risks for their safety and well-being.

In this research, I combine the lens of digital closet (i.e., the controlled management of queer identity disclosure online) and minority stress to create a theoretical framework for understanding experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals who had their intimate content non-consensually circulated.

Drawing on semi-structured interviews (planned for spring 2026) with at least 10 LGBTIQ+ individuals who have experienced revenge pornography, I ask: How does the dissemination of revenge pornography affect the mental health of LGBTIQ+ people? The data will be analysed using thematic analysis, which will explore how disclosure of intimate content may carry devastating implications within queer communities due to compounded vulnerabilities.

The study has several practical and research-oriented implications. First, it highlights how current legal and societal debate on revenge pornography does not consider the harm faced by LGBTIQ+ people and should be adjusted to better recognise these different impacts. Second, by focusing on queer voices, this study responds to the dearth of research on LGBTIQ+ experiences with revenge pornography and thus contributes to expanding the understanding of experiences of sexual minorities online. Third, by combining the digital closet and minority stress framework, the study will offer a novel approach for understanding the intersection of digital sexual violence and LGBTIQ+ identities that illustrate how revenge pornography can function as a forced outing that compounds pre-existing minority stressors. Findings will offer practical implications for therapeutic practice, nonprofit organisations, and educational institutions supporting LGBTIQ+ individuals affected by this form of sexual violence.

POS01 Poster session

P15 HCO Suicide reporting by UK news producers on Instagram, TikTok and Facebook: A multi-modal, cross-platform content analysis

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Researchers have long found that how news producers report about suicide deaths can impact population suicide rates: sensationalizing or simplifying suicide can lead to higher suicide rates within a population (Werther effect), whereas stories of recovery and hope are associated with lower-than-expected rates (Papageno effect) (Domaradzki, 2021; Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2010). Little research has been conducted on suicide reporting on social media, where news content is increasingly being adapted and consumed (Newman et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study examines how articles reporting on suicide deaths by large news producers in the United Kingdom are adapted for Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. I further examine to what extent adapted news content conforms to existing suicide reporting guidelines, and whether user engagement differs according to adherence to these guidelines. Looking at how suicide reporting differs across social media platforms will yield both platform-specific insights regarding reporting of suicide content and build on earlier investigations of social media user engagement with suicide news (e.g., Sumner et al., 2020). All articles with a primary focus on a suicide death created by public (BBC.com), broadsheet (*The Guardian*), and tabloid (*Daily Mail*) news producers from 1 January 2024 to 1 January 2026 will be sampled. Whether and how these articles have been adapted to Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, each of has its own affordances and audiences (Bucher & Helmond, 2017), will be examined using content analysis. The analysis codebook will be developed using insights from past research (Hase et al., 2023; Hendrickx & Vázquez-Herrero, 2024) and suicide reporting guidelines (World Health Organization, 2023). In addition to comparing content across platforms, I will examine how user engagement differs across platforms and according to level of adherence to suicide reporting guidelines. Data collection and analysis will be conducted in winter and spring of 2026, with the aim of submitting for publication by autumn 2026. The results of this study can provide a basis for adaptation and more nuanced application of suicide reporting guidelines for social media.

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POS01 Poster session

P16 JOS The new normal? Precarization of Czech media

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Over the past 15 years, numerous qualitative studies (Gollmitzer, 2014; Örnebring, 2018; Marín-Sanchiz et al., 2023) have demonstrated that journalism has become increasingly precarious, leaving journalists exposed to structural insecurity that may influence their career paths as well as the future of journalism as a profession. Despite this, little quantitative evidence exists, meaning that the sociodemographic characteristics of precarious journalists and the extent to which they face uncertain working conditions remain insufficiently understood. Such conditions include unstable or insufficient income, fixed-term contracts, inadequate social protection, and the absence of employee insurance.

This paper therefore aims to systematically examine precariousness in Czech journalism at three levels—economic, legislative, and institutional—drawing on existing theories of precarity in media work (Rick, 2024). The theoretical framework is grounded in Standing's (2011) concept of the precariat as a class defined by labour-market insecurity, as well as in research by Deuze (2007) and Gollmitzer (2014), who have examined the long-term deterioration of journalistic working conditions.

To explore sociodemographic characteristics associated with precariousness, a quantitative survey will be employed. The planned research sample consists of approximately 300–400 journalists working in Czech news and current-affairs media who are directly involved in content production. The questionnaire focuses on economic insecurity (income from journalistic work), legislative insecurity (employment type), and institutional insecurity (social support). This design follows the methodological approach of established comparative studies of journalistic populations (Hanitzsch et al., 2011). To identify relationships and predictors of precarity, bivariate and multivariate analytical techniques will be used, including correlation analysis, logistic regression and exploratory cluster analysis (Disman, 2011).

Although many qualitative studies have mapped journalists' subjective experiences of precarity, only one quantitative study to date (Rick, 2024) has examined the phenomenon using objective indicators. By combining sociodemographic, economic, and institutional variables, this study is expected to provide the first systematic typology of precarious journalists in the Czech context and to identify which structural factors most strongly predict precarious working conditions. The findings are intended to contribute to broader debates on labour inequalities in journalism and to provide an empirically grounded basis for future policy and organisational measures aimed at improving the sustainability of journalistic work.

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POS01 Poster session

P17 JOS Forgotten and overlooked: Longstanding and emerging challenges in bridging Computational Framing Analysis with its pre-digital roots

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Framing is among the most established and widely employed concepts in media and communication research. Yet since its inception, it has also been marked by conceptual heterogeneity, stemming from interdisciplinary and diverse theoretical origins (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2019). The shift from legacy to digital media environments, together with the rise of automated and computational approaches to framing analysis, has only amplified this heterogeneity (Otmakhova et al., 2024). This epistemological shift has reshaped and intensified longstanding concerns about framing's coherence, particularly as methodological innovation appears to be advancing faster than framing's conceptualization.

This study addresses framing as a research tradition situated on shifting epistemological ground. It conducts a dual systematic review in parallel: first, of recent empirical studies that employ computational tools to detect and measure media frames at scale; and second, of theoretical and systematic reviews that reflect on framing's conceptual development across its pre-digital and computational phases. By reading these literatures together rather than in isolation, the review asks not only how framing is currently being measured, but also what kind of theoretical concept framing is becoming under conditions of automation.

The analysis identifies five overarching challenges that currently distance computational framing research from its theoretical and pre-digital roots. Three are inherited but insufficiently resolved "forgotten" challenges: the Fragmentation Challenge, the Gradient Concepts Challenge, and the Abstractness Challenge. These originate in pre-digital framing debates and persist—often implicitly—within computational applications. Two additional challenges are "overlooked" and emerge

more directly from the computational turn itself: the Contextual Embeddedness Challenge, concerning the sidelining of audience, culture, and meaning-making, and the Ideological Flattening Challenge, by which framing increasingly risks being reduced to the detection of polarized or oppositional positions.

Together, these challenges suggest that automated framing analysis is not merely expanding existing paths but actively reconfiguring them. If left unaddressed, this trajectory risks narrowing framing's explanatory scope to detectable textual patterns at precisely the moment when communication research must cope with increasing complexity and ostensible ideology. The work concludes by outlining possible directions for reconnecting computational innovation with framing's theoretical commitments, arguing for preserving framing's relevance while adapting responsibly to shifting methodological ground.

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POS01 Poster session

P18 JOS Building tomorrow's AI skills in journalism: An investigation into teaching prerequisites and practices at German universities

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AI has become increasingly embedded in journalism as news organizations institutionalize AI-driven systems within editorial processes and workflows (Borchardt et al., 2025). This development heightens the importance of journalists' AI literacy as a professional competence to ensure responsible, ethical, and autonomous journalism (Helberger et al., 2022). While prior research has emphasized AI literacy among media professionals, less is known about how journalism education and institutional contexts shape the AI literacy of aspiring journalists.

This study examines journalism instructors' perspectives on AI literacy in higher education. Conceptually, it builds on Ng et al.'s (2021) multidimensional framework of AI literacy, encompassing knowing and understanding AI, using and applying AI, evaluating and creating AI-based outputs, and reflecting on AI ethics. The study addresses three research questions: (1) how journalism instructors assess their own AI literacy, (2) how they integrate different dimensions of AI literacy into journalism education, and (3) which individual and institutional factors facilitate or constrain AI-related teaching.

Methodologically, the study draws on semi-structured interviews with 19 journalism educators from 18 bachelor's and master's programs in journalism in Germany. Interview data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Preliminary findings show broad agreement that AI is a relevant topic in journalism education. AI is framed as a cross-cutting or "meta-topic" rather than a standalone subject. However, instructors report significant constraints, including limited self-assessed AI expertise, the rapid pace of technological change, and structural challenges within universities, such as scarce resources and inflexible curricula. These are challenges that echo earlier observations on barriers to AI literacy development (Dodds et al., 2025). Where AI is addressed in teaching, emphasis is placed primarily on ethical reflection and critical evaluation, while hands-on application is often delegated to practice-oriented modules or external experts. Instructors see their role not in teaching operational AI skills, but in fostering critical, ethically informed reflection on AI in journalism. This approach aligns with understandings of AI literacy as a reflective and normative competence (Ng et al., 2022). By foregrounding educators' perspectives, this study contributes empirical insights into an underexplored dimension of journalism education and provides a foundation for future curriculum and faculty development.

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POS01 Poster session

P19 JOS Between traditional and political role performance? The manifestation of journalistic role performances in alternative and traditional news media

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Alternative news media have become increasingly visible actors in digital public spheres. While prior research has focused on misinformation (Mourão & Robertson, 2019) or professional self-understandings (Figenschou & Ihlebaek, 2025), less is known about the broader range of journalistic role performances in alternative news media content and how these performances relate to political motivations. As journalistic roles structure how news contributes to public discourse, focusing only on misinformation or self-perception provides an incomplete understanding of how alternative news media intervene in political communication. We address this gap by systematically examining forms of journalistic role performance in alternative news media and comparing them to those of traditional news outlets.

Theoretically, the study builds on Mellado's (2020) role performance framework, which conceptualizes journalistic roles as observable patterns in news content, known as interventionist, watchdog, loyal-facilitator, service and civic role performances. To address the often blurred boundaries between journalism and political communication in alternative news media, this framework is combined with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (van Zomeren, 2016), allowing us to capture how political motivations such as collective identity, emotion, morality, and perceived efficacy become embedded in journalistic role performances.

Empirically, the study is based on a manual quantitative content analysis of 1,800 news articles published between September 2024 and August 2025. The sample includes six German alternative news media outlets (Tichys Einblick, Epoch Times, Junge Freiheit, (NIUS, Reitschuster, Achse des Guten). Additionally, three traditional outlets are benchmark media (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and tagesschau.de). Each article is coded for six journalistic roles according to Mellado (2020) and for the political motivations embedded in the content (van Zomeren, 2016). Using cluster analysis, the study examines how political motivations and journalistic role performances coalesce into distinct patterns (similarly, Staender et al., 2024).

At the time of submission, the coding scheme is refined, and the coding process is currently being prepared. The findings are expected to clarify how different forms of peripheral positioning translate into distinct configurations of journalistic role performance and political motivation across alternative and traditional news media.

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POS01 Poster session

P20 JOS Information overload: Journalists' perceptions and coping strategies

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Journalists process information at work and continue to consume it beyond working hours. This dual exposure makes them potential targets of information overload. This phenomenon refers to a subjective feeling of being overwhelmed when information demands (e.g., high information quantity or low information quality) exceed one's processing capacity, which can negatively affect performance and well-being.

Based on existing literature, research focusing specifically on journalists remains limited. Addressing this gap is important given journalists' key role in maintaining democracy. If affected by information overload, journalists' ability to fulfill this societal role could be compromised. Responding to calls for a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon, this study examines how journalists perceive information overload in their work (RQ1) and nonwork context (RQ2). Additionally, it

explores the coping strategies journalists employ to manage it (RQ3). The key contribution of this study is an empirically grounded model of information overload from a journalistic perspective, adapted from a context-neutral model by Graf and Antoni (2023).

The study adopts a qualitative case study design. The sample consists of 11 news agency editors from Czechia, selected through maximum variation sampling. Selection criteria included gender, years of experience in the news agency, news section, and position (managing or publishing editor). Data were collected through two-week non-participant observation in the newsroom and semi-structured interviews and analyzed using reflective thematic analysis.

By linking work and nonwork contexts, the adapted model conceptualizes information overload as primarily work-based, with consequences extending to editors' personal lives through a spillover effect. The findings highlight that despite high information exposure at work, editors do not perceive information overload as a significant strain on their performance and well-being. Instead, they perceive it as a situational burden, moderated by influencing factors (e.g., experience, shift work, technical equipment) and coping strategies (e.g., filtering, prioritizing, withdrawing). Furthermore, editors do not perceive information overload originating in a nonwork context, but they can still be affected by its consequences, such as reduced attention or tiredness, that spill over from work. These findings provide context-specific insights into information overload and identify effective strategies journalists can use to mitigate or prevent it.

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POS01 Poster session

P21 JOS When the use of AI fails: Evidence from a survey experiment on public perception of trust and legitimacy in news media

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AI is increasingly deployed across society, including in news media, and AI errors have already appeared in national newspapers (e.g., Greger, 2025; Thobo-Carlsen, 2025). A growing overarching concern is that AI is increasingly implemented in news media, and there is a fear that this could damage audience trust (Toff & Simon, 2025). While there is much literature on AI in the news media (e.g., Cools & De Vreese, 2025; Leuppert et al., 2025; Morosoli et al., 2025), we lack knowledge about the implications of AI errors and their consequences on public perception.

This study presents evidence from a preregistered (https://osf.io/4e725/overview?view_only=0a372d28e77d49f6ba8bcac03a4258a5) survey experiment (N = 2030). I examine how public perceptions of trust and acceptance vary when AI errors occur with a 2 (authorship: human vs. AI) x 2 (outcome: no error vs. error) x 2 (actor: news media vs. public administration (PA)) factorial design. News media and PA are compared as they find themselves in similar situations; both perform important public tasks, depend on trust and legitimacy, and increasingly use AI. Trust is measured as trust in actor in given situation, and legitimacy as acceptance of actor publishing the article or report.

In line with the preregistered hypotheses, I find that AI-written articles reduce trust and acceptance, indicating an AI-penalty. Errors in articles reduce trust and acceptance. Importantly, this error-penalty is significantly much stronger than the AI-penalty. AI-written articles containing errors result in loss of trust and acceptance compared to human-written articles with errors. To assess whether these results are unique for the news sector, I compare them to PA. Similar patterns are observed for both sectors. However, the AI-penalty on trust and the error-penalty on trust and acceptance are significantly stronger for PA than for news media. The AI-penalty when errors are present is also stronger for PA for acceptance. While AI and error penalties are not exclusive to news media, the differences in effect size suggest there is something context-dependent about the public perception of trust and legitimacy in news media.

This paper is a work in progress; I received data in December 2025 and have recently conducted the analysis.

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POS01 Poster session

P22 JOS The future of journalism from the stakeholders' perspective: An early-stage PhD project

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It has become popular to describe the state of contemporary journalism as one of a "crisis" (Brüggemann et al., 2016; Neuberger, 2025), with some of its perceived causes ranging from the collapse of the advertising-based business model (European Commission et al., 2024) over the rise of news avoidance and news fatigue among audiences (Newman et al., 2025) to political pressures on the freedom of the press worldwide. Yet, there is little knowledge about how the representatives of news organisations themselves interpret the current state of journalism and how these interpretations shape their strategic decisions. Further, journalists and media executives tend to rely on their imaginations of the audience (Litt, 2012; Nelson, 2021) when adopting innovation in reporting and making strategic decisions, but we do not have sufficient information about the audiences' interpretation of the crisis either, as well as what changes to journalism they deem acceptable or desirable.

The PhD project, currently in its first year and in the phase of a literature review, aims to investigate the perspectives of stakeholders within Czech journalism, understood as media executives, journalists, and members of the public, on: (1) how they interpret the current state of Czech journalism and the causes for this perceived state; (2) what they believe and wish journalism should be like in the future; and (3) how they envision the transition from the current state of affairs to the desired future one. Further, a systematic literature review will investigate theoretical assumptions among relevant "X-journalisms" (Loosen et al., 2022) which claim to offer a remedy to journalism's ails. Semi-structured qualitative interviewing is to be used for the study of media practitioners, while either focus groups or a standardised survey will be used to investigate the audiences' perspective.

The Czech case provides an insightful environment for studying the problem, as the local public debate lacks relevant think-tanks or similar organisations providing stakeholders with suggestions regarding the future of journalism. This stands in contrast to the countries of Western Europe and the US where research on novel approaches to reporting has mostly concentrated so far.

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POS01 Poster session

P23 MIP Join the rhythm: entertainment-based selling as cultural production through cross-gendered endorsement and rhythmic slogan-based performance in live-streaming e-commerce

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Live-streaming e-commerce has become a key growth engine within media industries (Hao & Chen, 2025). In this competitive environment, capturing audience attention has driven the emergence of entertainment-based selling practices (Abidin,

2016). This study investigates how entertainment-based selling is shaped by China's cultural context, and how gendered embodiment and rhythmic performance are enacted in live-streaming e-commerce.

Drawing on a qualitative case study of livestream selling performances on Chinese TikTok (Douyin), this study examines a culturally distinctive selling format characterized by cross-gendered endorsement—male streamers selling female-oriented products such as high-heeled shoes (Mo & Yang, 2026)—and rhythmic, slogan-based performance. Building on scholarship that conceptualises slogans in political communication as performative and rhythmic communicative acts rather than purely propositional statements (Das, 2022; Lee, 2015), the study extends this perspective to live-streaming e-commerce, where rhythmic, slogen-based performance operates as part of entertainment-based selling practices. Using a multimodal analysis (Norris, 2004), it explores how selling is enacted through the coordination of speech, bodily movement, and rhythmic synchronization rather than through detailed product explanation .

The analysis is guided by a two-part theoretical framework. First, this study identifies a mode of cross-gender endorsement (Mo & Yang, 2026) in which male streamers do not adopt feminised appearances, but instead present their bodies as neutral testing devices for female-oriented products (Labrecque, 2014). This performance shifts attention away from gendered self-display and towards product quality (Abidin, 2016). The selected case centres on an emergent selling format in which male streamers try on high-heeled shoes and perform synchronised rhythmic movements to test quality. Across such performances, synchronised movement functions as visual proof of product reliability and as an attention-management strategy foregrounding entertainment (Connell, 2005). Second, the streamers employ rhythmic, slogan-based performance combined with synchronised bodily movement, drawing on the aesthetic legacies of socialist mass culture in China, where slogans, synchronised bodies, and repetitive movement function as familiar forms of collective expression (McNeill, 1997; McGrath, 2008).

This study seeks to understand cross-gendered endorsement and rhythmic, slogan-based performance as an entertainment-based selling strategy in live-streaming e-commerce in China. Theoretically, it contributes to media studies by broadening understandings of live-streaming e-commerce.

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POS01 Poster session

P24 POL Scrolling from the margins: The social media and perceived political visibility of youth living in peripheral areas

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Social networking sites (SNS) shape how youth engage with politics, yet existing research largely treats young people as a homogeneous demographic, neglecting geographic disparities and the symbolic dimension of political recognition. What has not been particularly studied is how young people in peripheries experience SNS as a space where political visibility, particularly feeling seen or overlooked, is mediated. Ignoring this "double vulnerability" of age and spatial marginalization can exacerbate their feelings of being "forgotten" or "left behind" which can contribute to disengagement, radicalization, or support for populist parties or populist ideas. Drawing on recognition theory and relational approaches to peripherality, we conceptualize perceptions of political visibility as a form of symbolic recognition, shaped by encounters with SNS content that either facilitates or hinders peripheral experiences.

We aim to fill the gap by focusing on how youth in peripheral regions make sense of their political visibility through everyday encounters with SNS, focusing on forms of political information exposure to social media content and visuals such as

memes and reels. Key questions include: How does exposure to political and visual content on social media shape young people's perceptions of political visibility in peripheral areas? We will conduct 20–25 semi-structured interviews with youth aged 18–25 residing in geographically peripheral areas, using visual prompts and guided SNS walkthroughs to capture their interpretations of content.

We anticipate that SNS content reflecting peripheral experiences can enhance perceptions of political visibility and mitigate feelings of being left behind, whereas content disconnected from these experiences may reinforce invisibility and alienation. In particular, when people find content on SNS that is consistent with their peripheral experiences, i.e., content with which they can identify, SNS can serve as a kind of "center" that can help them overcome feelings of marginalization.

This study contributes to research on youth political engagement by conceptualizing perceived political visibility as a key mechanism linking SNS use to engagement of youth in peripheral regions. It advances the study of peripherality as a relational experience shaped by digital media and highlights social media as a site where symbolic recognition and political inclusion are negotiated.

POS01 Poster session

P25 POL From reactive to proactive moderation: AI tools for political discourse on social media

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Although social media serves as a central arena for political discourse, debates are frequently disrupted by phenomena such as incivility (Duncan et al., 2024). Given the vast volume of online discussions, automated and semi-automated (human-in-the-loop) moderation has become an increasingly relevant and promising tool for enabling constructive political discourse at scale (Argyle et al., 2023). However, reactive moderation, the predominant practice in online moderation, functions as "post-hoc damage control" (Schluger et al., 2022, p. 4) and exposes individuals to harmful content before removal. In contrast, proactive approaches that seek to predict the future occurrence of harmful content can intervene before conversations derail (e.g., into toxic language), enabling timely, scalable, and cost-effective moderation that better protects users and moderators (Altarawneh et al., 2024; Schluger et al., 2022).

Even though generative artificial intelligence (AI) opens new possibilities for making automated proactive approaches feasible (Nonaka & Yoshida, 2025), these tools remain under-researched (Chakraborty, 2025). Furthermore, they entail a wide range of risks and ethical challenges (Schluger et al., 2022), including model biases in conversation forecasting that may particularly harm marginalized groups (Chang, 2024). However, these considerations have played a minor role in the research field, occurring more as risk assessments, rather than in the form of ethical frameworks that could inform future, admittedly high-risk, real-world implementations (Chang, 2024). Against this backdrop, my dissertation advances the field by moving beyond reactive intervention towards ethically sound conversation forecasting and proactive strategies. This approach aims to mitigate conversation derailment, thereby supporting constructive online debates, and addressing the following research questions:

RQ1: *How can AI-based (semi-)automated interventions be designed to predict and prevent conversation derailment while adhering to ethical standards and mitigating potential biases?*

RQ2: *How do users perceive and react to proactive interventions?*

To explore these questions, this planned dissertation will follow a four-phase, mixed-methods design: (1) identification of research gaps and promising approaches through a systematic review; (2) comparison of (AI-based) forecasting approaches to identify best practices; (3) controlled experiments with "human-in-the-loop" monitoring testing promising (semi-)automated proactive interventions (e.g., de-escalation prompts by AI-bots); and (4) evaluation of user perceptions and attitudes via follow-up surveys and semi-structured interviews.

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POS01 Poster session

P26 POL Trending tradition: Conservative identity construction in online spaces

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TikTok's short-form, algorithmically curated environment is a shifting ground where young users forge collective identities through sound, meme formats, and aesthetic repetition. This poster presents how conservative identities form and function within digital spaces – aiming to identify visual motifs and communicative strategies that underpin the construction of conservative identity in digital contexts. Building on my doctoral project proposal, the poster thematizes how smaller discursive arenas shape group identities and collective imaginaries, and how these arenas exert influence on the broader public sphere. By framing these phenomena as meaning-making processes, the project advances scholarship on how conservative identities emerge in digital media and situates these dynamics within public sphere theory.

The study focuses on in-group dynamics within conservative TikTok publics by establishing ten diverse experimental research profiles and combining qualitative content analysis with thirty in-depth interviews. The project integrates users, platform affordances, and publics into a coherent analytic framework to reconstruct the emergence of conservative identity and the power relations that shape it. Three types of empirical data – longitudinal digital observation of influencers and users on TikTok, qualitative content analysis of selected trends, and semi-structured interviews with influencers and users – enable the development of conceptual groupings focusing on communication, language, interactions, environment, meanings and narratives. Further analysis of posts, patterns of online behaviour, and interactions among users will examine how information is framed and how participants assign meaning to themselves and to the broader public sphere.

The proposed research is highly socially relevant as radical and extremist movements are gaining popularity and emerging in new digital spaces and communicating in new ways. Contextualization these developments contributes to a more nuanced and empirically grounded understanding of how algorithmically mediated platforms reconfigure everyday communication, identity formation, and the distribution of symbolic power in contemporary publics. The poster visualizes an initial mapping of conservative TikTok groupings, highlights methodological approaches to researching volatile, platform-mediated publics, and presents concrete examples of trend-based framing alongside preliminary typologies of conservative visual culture.

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POS01 Poster session

P28 SCI Communicating climate in the digital platform society: Visual practices, new communicators and the rise of GenAI in science communication

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Climate change is a paradigmatic case of post-normal science, characterised by high uncertainty, political contestation, and urgent societal relevance. At the same time, science communication has undergone a profound transformation through the rise of digital platforms, short-form video, and generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). This cumulative doctoral project examines how climate-related science communication is reshaped within contemporary platform environments, with a particular focus on multimodal visual practices, changing communicator roles, and emerging AI-driven forms of content production. The dissertation mainly addresses three interrelated research questions: (1) which visual-narrative formats and communicative strategies dominate in climate science communication on multimodal platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube; (2) how traditional communicators (e.g. scientists, journalists, institutions) differ from "non-traditional" actors (e.g. influencers, activists, citizen communicators) in style, reach, and perceived authority; and (3) how GenAI is integrated into climate communication and how audiences evaluate AI-generated content in terms of credibility and authenticity. The project is theoretically grounded in mediatization theory, platform studies, visual epistemology, and post-normal science. Methodologically, it follows a mixed-methods approach across four interconnected empirical studies, combining large-scale computational content analysis of short-form videos with multimodal qualitative analysis, comparative engagement metrics, and exploratory reception analyses. Empirical materials include platform data from TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as AI-generated visual climate content. The dissertation aims to contribute (1) an empirically grounded typology of platform-based climate communication formats, (2) a systematic comparison of authority and trust dynamics between traditional and non-traditional communicators, and (3) an assessment of the epistemic and communicative implications of GenAI for science communication. The project is currently in a semi-advanced empirical stage, with data collection and analyses underway in advanced progress for several individual papers. The poster presents interim findings, methodological decisions, and conceptual challenges for discussion and feedback.

POS01 Poster session

P29 SCI Climate change communication on Instagram: An experimental study on the effects of threat and collective efficacy

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Climate activism on social media emphasizes the threat of climate change and elicits diverse reactions, ranging from pro-environmental behavior to defensive rejection. According to fear-appeal research, threat-focused climate activism should promote pro-environmental behavior when messages enhance perceived climate protection efficacy, whereas low perceived efficacy fosters maladaptive strategies such as delegitimizing the message (Witte, 1992). We posit that perceived collective efficacy is central in this process, as effective climate change mitigation depends on coordinated collective action (Jugert et al., 2016).

To examine how the design of climate change social media activism messages affects recipients' perceptions and behavioral intentions, we conducted a 2x2 laboratory experiment using a two-slide, text-based fictitious Instagram post as stimulus. The first slide manipulated climate change threat (high vs. low), and the second slide manipulated perceived collective climate protection efficacy (high vs. low). A total of 111 participants aged 18–63 years were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Following stimulus exposure, participants completed established scales assessing cognitive processing of the message (defensive avoidance, message derogation, perceived manipulation), and online and offline pro-environmental behavioral intentions. Further, general climate skepticism was considered as a covariate.

Results suggest that the manipulation of high vs. low perceived threat worked well, while the manipulation of perceived efficacy was less successful, which should be kept in mind when interpreting the results. We conducted ANCOVAs to examine how the two experimental factors and the covariate were related to the outcome variables. In all analyses, we found that general climate skepticism was the most important predictor of behavioral intentions and cognitive processing of the message, which puts the influence of one-time exposure to social media climate change activism into perspective. Accordingly, we did not find significant effects of threat and efficacy manipulations on most of the dependent variables as well as no significant interaction effects. However, interestingly, we found that participants in the high threat condition found the message more manipulative than in the low threat condition. Thus, one could conclude that climate change messages should not be formulated in a too threatening manner to avoid creating a sense of being manipulated.

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POS01 Poster session

P30 SCI Understanding the implementation of sustainability measures from a dairy farmer's perspective

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Farmers are facing increasingly complex decisions in sustainability transitions in agriculture, shaped by policies, economic viability (Farstad et al., 2022), and public debate. In the Netherlands, dairy farmers encounter emission reduction policies that require significant changes to business operations and on-farm practices. Despite policymakers' efforts, prior research suggests a discrepancy between policy intentions and the feasibility of implementation by farmers (de Lauwere et al., 2014). For example, constantly changing laws and regulations can lead to uncertainty and unnecessary delays in achieving actual emission reduction (Backus, 2024). Addressing this discrepancy requires understanding what determinants shape dairy farmers' decisions regarding the implementation of sustainability measures.

Understanding the decision-making underlying sustainability transitions requires more than a focus on individual behavior. Adopting a broader systems perspective can provide insight into the communicative and contextual factors that affect dairy farmers' decision-making. This explorative study therefore investigates the behavioral dynamics that shape decision-making in Dutch dairy farms, using a behavioral systems analysis.

The current study combines insights from approximately 30 semi-structured interviews with Dutch dairy farmers and related stakeholders, such as policymakers and interest representatives (fieldwork January-March 2026), with the results from a qualitative social media scan. The social media discourse on dairy farm policy and proposed sustainability transitions is also considered, as earlier research on the Dutch agro-food sector has shown that social media can influence public opinion and policy (Stevens et al., 2018). A behavioral systems map will display the key factors, possible feedback loops, and decision points that follow from the analyses.

The behavioural systems map will provide an integrated and context-sensitive overview of key determinants of decision-making (Lunetto et al., 2022). Additionally, the findings from this study will identify potential opportunities to better align emission reduction policies with dairy farmers' lived realities and their communicative environments. Overall, this study emphasises the value of systemic, behavioural, and communication-focused approaches for understanding pressing sustainability transitions.

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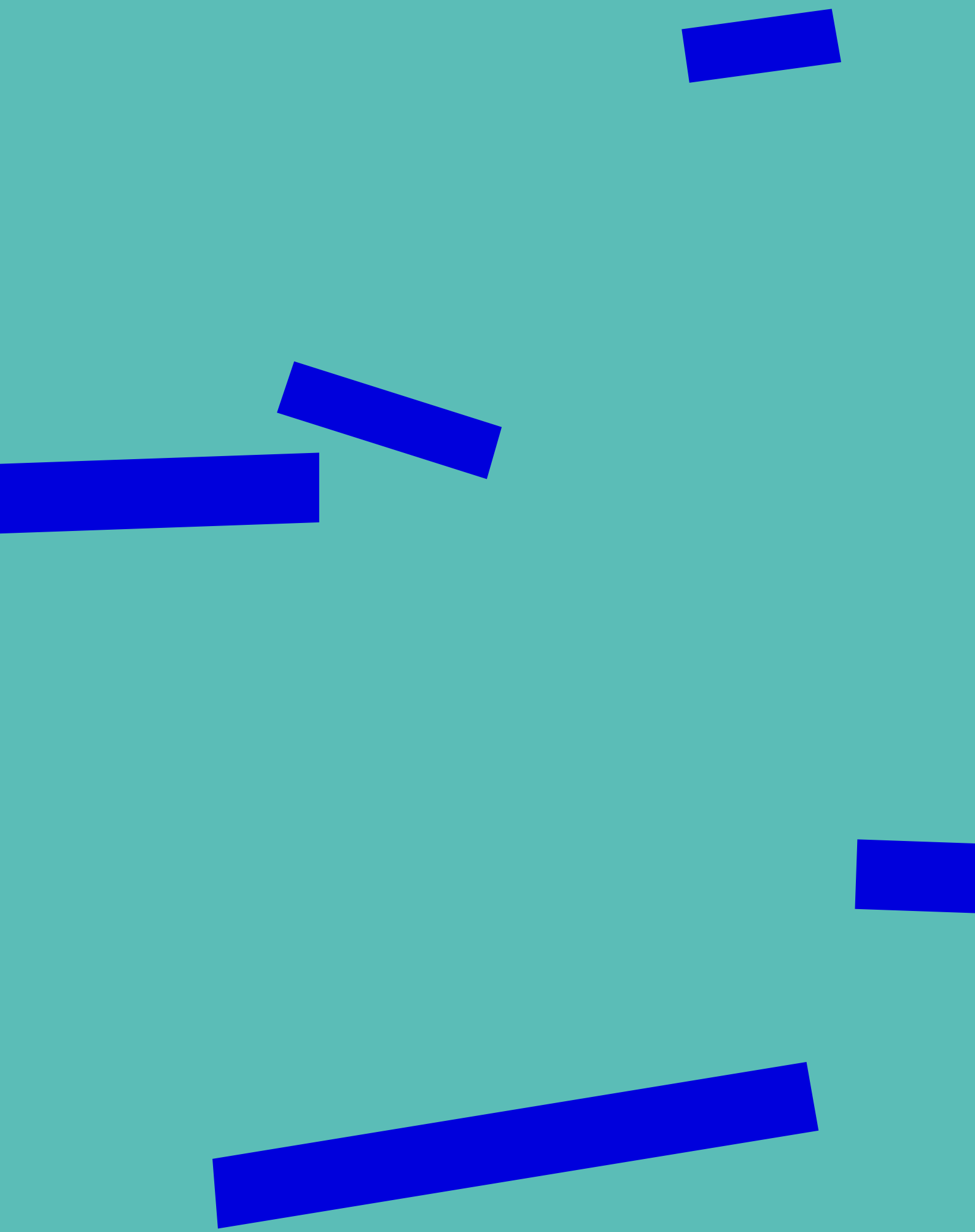
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