Workshop B - Platforms & Popular Culture
Location: Langeveld 0.08

ABSTRACTS OF THE TOPICS

Platform healthcare and new spaces of accumulation - Changing geographies of healthcare work and employment

Peter van Eerbeek, Department for Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

App-based consultations are of increasing importance to public healthcare systems in Europe, and tend to be provided by private for-profit companies. In Sweden the share of such consultations in the public primary healthcare has skyrocketed since 2015, receiving an additional boost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neoliberal restructuring in the 2000s opened the public healthcare sector up for capital accumulation, enabling the publicly financed provision of services by private for-profit companies. Apps innovated by platform health care companies diminished spatio-temporal barriers, allowing them to marketize services nationwide. In contrast to face-to-face provision by healthcare workers at primary care centers via appointments during office hours, consultations can now be provided on-demand at almost any time, from homes or elsewhere via an app, for an increasing number of health issues.

Focusing on Sweden, my PhD project intends to contribute to limited research on this new phenomenon which has zoomed in on (re-) distributional issues, cost-effectiveness, and new healthcare discourses. It suggests shifting attention to skilled healthcare workers (e.g. medical doctors, nurses, and psychologists) as active geographical agents in remaking the healthcare landscape to their individual and collective interests and needs. Theoretically, it draws on concepts from labor geography, digital geography, and feminist geography, as well as research on platform capitalism/ the gig economy, and Power Resource Approaches. The methods for this project consist of interviews, surveys, document analysis, and descriptive statistics.

This PhD project aims to analyze how the labor agency of skilled healthcare workers is affected by, and affects, the processes of restructuring in the healthcare sector, focusing on the rise of platform healthcare. Analyzing their motivations and actions, and reconfigurations of work and employment, tied to platform companies as new for-profit private actors in the healthcare landscape, provides a lens to gain insights into the marketization and restructuring of public healthcare, and how platform work provides new constraints and opportunities for high-skilled workers engaged in public sector service provision.

The research questions are the following:
1.   Mapping the landscape: How and why did platform companies emerge in the healthcare landscape, and what are their roles and importance?
2.   Labor markets: How is platform work reconfiguring skilled healthcare workers' geography of employment, and what are their motivations for opting for platform work?
3.   Workplace hierarchies: How do platform work and the attendant changing geographies of healthcare impact gendered workplace hierarchies, and inequalities between and within categories of skilled healthcare workers?
4.   Trade unions: How do skilled healthcare workers experience platform work, their workplace, trade unions, and relations to wider communities?

Between "activism" and "mundanity". Transmedia audiences and practices of everyday resistance: constructing Russian protest movements.

Svetlana Chuikina, Department for Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

Possible submission topics:
• Theoretical developments in the sociology of technology in movement
• The historical, social, and political contingency of the role of technology in movement

The project studies the construction of Russian protest movements, including activists, but also in a wider sense as related to media practices of broader audiences and publics. Currently, in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine, many among the politically active youth have left the country and become part of a (re)construction of the anti-war movement outside Russia and around the world (mainly the EU). The primary interest of this study is to look at the transforming politicisation of these broader audiences, in accordance with the process of mediatization of everyday life.

A number of concepts have been introduced by scholars aiming to grasp the dynamic of digital audience participation in political action: from the earlier and more technologically oriented approaches, such as the concept of 'the logic of connective action' developed by Bennett and Segerberg (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), to more recent and perhaps more nuanced views on digitalised audiences, which bring "audience agency" (Livingstone, 2019; Ytre-Arne & Das, 2020) to the forefront. Earlier, the 'network' (Castells, 2007) metaphor generally dominated the epistemological paradigm (Kaun & Uldam, 2018); and many studies on activism have tended to focus explicitly on the 'event-based perspective' (Liu, 2017). Missing in such approaches is "the importance of meso-level collective initiatives which generate 'multitudinous identities'" (Bakardjieva, 2015), that are connected in complex patterns via transmedia platforms with the frameworks of movements.

Bringing together debates on social movement construction and audience study as one branch of discussion, and theory of affordance (Nagy and Neff, 2015; Shaw, 2017) and transmedia (Jankins, 2013; Fast & Jansson, 2019) as another, the aim of this article is to build a theoretical understanding of *how transmedia platforms' affordances contribute to shared time and space construction and in what way people decode these affordances. Moreover, how do transmedia- platform affordances change the nature of media event(s)?*

Research departs theoretically from Peters' media environment perspective in which digital and datafied media 'point us' in space and time and 'keep us on the grid' (Peters, 2015), providing logistics and navigation diffused in structures of everyday life and transmedia environments. The article envisions a theoretical framework that recognises how transformed media environments of the mundane reshape events (e.g. 'media event', see Frosh and Pinchevski, 2018), how actors experience 'togetherness' and a sort of reassurance and belonging through these 'small acts of engagement' – SAE (Picone et.al., 2021), not necessarily by generating content, but rather as means of orientation in terms of numbers and metrics, by negotiating and rearranging algorithmic 'logistics' (Rossiter, 2021).

Metrics as a signifier and catalyst of journalism values
Carina Tenor, Department for Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

Digital metrics are seen as increasingly useful to guide and evaluate editorial decisions in online newsrooms (Lamot & Paulussen, 2020). Initially, much debate concerned audience clicks as commercialisation and driver of sensationalist news (Fürst, 2020), but with time, metrified targets and evaluations have become "the new normal" in journalistic production (Christin & Petre, 2020). By empirically looking at the case of the Swedish news industry, the purpose of this study is to analyse how metrics are used as a managerial strategy to rationalise journalism labour, and ultimately, its implication for journalism's norms and practices. The material contains of interviews on two levels: strategic management (individual) and journalists (focus groups) plus textual sources of trade press articles, internal documents, published interviews, etc. According to neo-institutional theory, the organisational field's stability is an important feature to become acknowledged as a societal institution (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Vos, 2019). The questions is how this technological change have impacted the internal norms, beliefs, values, practices, and identities of journalists, i.e. the meso-level linking the daily activities within news organisations with the macro-level of journalism as an institution (Ryfe, 2006).

Metrics are in this study conceptualised as a signifier and a catalyst of journalism values in relation to changed economic and managerial conditions: A signifier in terms of making managerial evaluation

and strategies visible, a catalyst in terms of metrics' capacity to stir conflicts and tension, and thereby uncover values and ideology. This study contributes to research on the cultural and material innovation in newsrooms summed up as *measurable journalism,* and more specifically, to the organisational understanding of this diffusion in a digitally mature country with a strong press tradition like Sweden.

Liquid strategies for solid engagement – Agile and co-creative strategic communication practices and systems in the datadriven and platformised music industry

Jessica Edlom, Department for Geography, Media and Communication, Karlstad University

In my thesis I aim at understanding if and how strategic communication practices are enacted and designed to cater for audience/consumer/fan engagement. Focus is on the music industry, which uses digital platforms at a very high level – digitally sharing and distributing content, building and spreading music brands and narratives, interacting with consumers and pushing for engagement, and monitoring the engagement via data collection. There is a tension between trying to encourage, follow and understand active and co-creative audiences on the one hand, and trying to strategically steer them to act in anticipated ways within communication campaigns and branding, on the other. This can in both cases be challenging for an organisation, as the fast pace of the dynamic digital landscape demands constant changes, openness and calls for flexibility and at the same time constant learning from the organisation. Here I use theories on liquidity, emergence and strategy as practice to understand these tensions.

Furthermore, I am interested in social consequences of promotional work within the music industry, and the different dependences, negotiations and power relations within it, using for example theories on structuration and eco-systems. My aim is in these regards to deepen understanding of the consequences of what I call an engagement imperative – requirements to "produce" engagement – on the strategic communication practitioners, as well as on the consumers, and the relations between them. I am therefore exploring both the promotional practices, their contexts and systems and the people within them, responding to calls for research on socio-cultural aspects of strategic communication.

Producing Polish televised football: Exploring (re)constructions of race/ethnicity and gender in Polish sport media organizations

Arne van Lienden
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Jacco van Sterkenburg
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Mélodine Sommier
University of Jyväskylä

Radoslaw Kossakowski
University of Gdansk

A wide body of previous works in various national contexts has explored representations of race/ethnicity – and intersections with nationality and gender, among other social identity dimensions - in mediated sport content. Many of these works found that sport journalists and commentators often rely on reductionist and occasionally stereotypical discourses when giving meaning to the capabilities and qualities of minoritized athletes. The majority of these previous studies have focused on sport media content, but much less remains known about the organizational processes, hegemonic work routines and professional self-understandings of sport media professionals and how these relate to the representations of race/ethnicity in mediated sport. This goes especially for contexts beyond the Anglosphere, where the few earlier production studies

have been conducted.

In this presentation we aim to contribute to filling these lacunae by highlighting the main findings of a production study we conducted in the little researched context of Poland. By relying on data gathered in 16 in-depth interviews with journalists and commentators, together with field visits at various Polish sport media organizations, this presentation will highlight the dominant racialized and gendered discourses Polish sport media professionals speak through and how ideologies of Whiteness and masculinity permeate organizational processes.

"It is more than just a community": On the role of collectives and communication in enabling a sense of belonging among gig workers
Phuong Hoan Le

Purpose: Our study, which is part of a larger research project on social identification in gig work, seeks to answer the question how gig workers may identify with work-related communities. Subsequently, we explore what is understood by 'communities' in the gig work context, what functions these communities perform, and the communication processes that both facilitate and inhibit identification with communities. Doing so, we hope to provide more insight into the complex ways in which workers' social identities are constructed and negotiated within the gig economy, and to better understand the challenges and opportunities these workers face.

Theory: Gig work represents some of the extremes in temporary and precarious work as it is conducted on demand and independently under self-employment, and digital labor platforms often act as intermediaries that help workers find the next 'gig'. The rapid growth of (platform-mediated) gig work presents paradoxes allowing flexibility in determining when, how, and where to work, but being equally characterized by job insecurity, the lack of professional mentorship, career advancement, day-to-day work support, and feelings of isolation. Gig worker communities have been argued to be important for the success and wellbeing of gig workers, but it is not clear whether occupational and professional groups may become "surrogates" for organizations in providing a sense of belonging and what other forms of work relationships outside organizational boundaries may become important (Ashford et al., 2018). In light of the questions above, this study seeks to explore gig workers' identification with communities and makes use of social identity theory to explain what identification is (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1979/2011), community literature to understand the locus of identification (Delanty, 2018; Klein & D'Aunno, 1986; Marquis et al., 2011), and Burke's (1969) notion of 'consubstantiality' to explore how identification happens through social interaction.

Methods: We conducted 25 in-depth semi-structured interviews with gig workers in the Netherlands. 14 identified themselves as women and 11 as men, aged between 18 and 55 years, with all but one residing in (or very near) the biggest Dutch cities. Interviewees were sampled purposively to include platform-mediated, more 'traditional' gig work, and gig work as a side hustle or the main job. The resulting total of 432 pages of single-spaced transcripts were subjected to reflexive thematic analysis.

Preliminary findings: Our analyses resulted in a continuum of communities that gig workers can identify with, ranging from being bounded (e.g., a platform or client organization) to being permeable (e.g., Facebook groups and subreddits) to being imagined (e.g., illustrators or starting videographers on Instagram, or food deliverers in the world). Within these communities, they bond over traits that they perceive to have in common with the community members. Depending on the gig worker's communicative context, communities serve a range of functions, encompassing professional day-to-day functions (e.g., quick answers on work-related questions, new work opportunities), professional relational functions (e.g., work inspiration, self-branding), and cognitive functions (e.g., overcoming loneliness, career sensemaking). Results show that social interaction, even if brief, can make a difference in workers' sense of belonging.