MEDIATISATIONS

NORTH SOUTH

EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVES FROM SWEDEN AND BRAZIL

Edited by Göran Bolin, Jairo Ferreira,
Isabel Löfgren, Ada Machado da Silveira

Mediatisations North and South

Epistemological and Empirical Perspectives from Sweden and Brazil

Göran Bolin, Jairo Ferreira, Isabel Löfgren, & Ada C. Machado da Silveira (eds.)

Södertörns högskola

Trycksak
3041 0865

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Foreword

This book is a documentation of the collaborative project "Mediatisation: Empirical, Epistemological and Methodological Inferences from Media Research in Brazil and Sweden" between Södertörn University in Sweden, and two Brazilian universities, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS) and Universidade Federal Santa Maria (UFSM) jointly funded by the research foundations CAPES – Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement (Ministry of Education/Brazil) and STINT – The Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Higher Education (Sweden) between 2019 and 2023. The research exchange was directed by Professor Jairo Ferreira, on behalf of UNISINOS and UFSM and Professor Göran Bolin on behalf of Södertörn University, and Isabel Löfgren was the Research Coordinator of the project.

The activities included mutual visits, research stays for visiting professors, post-doctoral researchers, and doctoral students, and several academic events in both countries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the first two years of the research exchange, members of the research network met in online seminars and workshops.

The chapters in this volume reflect the academic production resulting from these activities, which took shape from theoretical reflections on the themes discussed in joint seminars and workshops, empirical studies done during research stays, and accounts of the shared experiences of Swedish and Brazilian researchers' mobility between Södertörn University, UNISINOS and UFSM in Sweden and Brazil. Many events have been recorded and can be found online on the YouTube channel *Midiaticom* https://www.youtube.com/@midiaticom3944.

Stockholm, Sweden and Santa Maria, Brazil, May 2024

Introduction
Empirical, Epistemological, and Methodological Aspects of Mediatisation North and South

Göran Bolin, Jairo Ferreira, Isabel Löfgren, & Ada C. Machado da Silveira

As societies have become increasingly more permeated by media and communication technologies over the past two or three decades, the concept of mediatisation has become established in scholarly work at various research centres in Europe and Latin America. Only relatively recently has there been a meeting between these traditions and a dialogue between them initiated (see, e.g., Scolari et al. 2022). Swedish and Scandinavian mediatisation researchers have in recent years increasingly acquainted themselves with Brazilian and Latin American mediatisation perspectives, as many of the European and Scandinavian researchers have been invited to Brazil and other Latin American countries to contribute to journals, conferences, and workshops (e.g. Bolin 2015; Hepp 2014; Hjarvard 2014). In the opposite direction, Brazilian and Latin American mediatisation researchers have been translated or have published in European journals and edited volumes.

From the perspective of theory on mediation and studies on reception, an early example is the publication by Jesus Martín-Barbero (1988) in *Media, Culture & Society*, an article that had some influence on European Policy research as well as within Cultural Studies scholarship (e.g. Schlesinger 1991, Morley 1992; see also Martín-Barbero 2002). From the perspective of mediatisation theory, there have also been publications by other researchers, such as Eliseo Verón (2014a). And, if we consider the importance of international research collaborations, it is important to highlight publications by Jairo Ferreira (2017), and Ciro Marcondes (see, e.g. Marcondes Filho 2016). Many publications from the biennial conference Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais have also been published in parallel in English and Portuguese (e.g. Ferreira et al 2020a, 2020b, 2022a, 2022b).

Such a dialogue between traditions was also the starting point for the joint project between Brazilian and Swedish media researchers that was initiated in 2019, with dual funding from both countries and with the aim to explore the

possible connections between researchers and research traditions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. To find common ground for discussions, the activities focused on the empirical, epistemological, and methodological inferences from researching mediatisation, bringing together researchers who were already involved in empirical research and theoretical and methodological development – and who could meet and exchange ideas and experiences.

It is evident that the institutional approach to mediatisation, which is dominant in the European research context, has not grown as strongly in Latin America. Although one could say that the social constructivist approach, with its longer timeframes and more inclusive approach to what counts as media, is more dominant in Latin America, it differs substantially from the European counterpart in that it is much more influenced by semiotics and Marxism. Where "content" and media texts are mainly absent from European mediatisation theory, "circulation of signs" and "semiosis" are concepts well integrated into Latin American approaches. In this introduction, we will give some background to the mediatisation perspectives on both continents. We will first account for some biographical details in the backgrounds of Latin American scholars, to trace the development of the concept of mediatisation. We will then describe the most common distinctions between perspectives of mediatisation in the European and Nordic settings, to then relate these approaches to the Latin American ones. Lastly, we will give a short description of the chapters in this volume.

Notes on the Genealogy of the Latin American Research Tradition

A specific task of our research collaboration project has been to foster understanding between the European and Latin American perspectives and approaches to mediatisation, to trace their genealogies, and to explore their implications. A peculiar circumstance is that the "founding scholars" (admittedly mainly "fathers") of Latin American mediatisation research were often educated in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, at the height of European structuralism and poststructuralism. Eliseo Verón was reading for Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss in Paris in the 1960s (Verón & Scolari 2021). Antônio Fausto Neto studied for his Ph.D. at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in 1982; José Luiz Braga earned his Ph.D. at Université de Paris II in 1984; and Ciro Marcondes took his Ph.D. in Sociology and Communication at the Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt (Daros 2022). This "first generation" of Latin American mediatisation scholars was thus brought up in European contexts, and their approaches to mediatisation bear clear marks of the structuralist and poststructuralist environment, mixed with the critical theory of the Frankfurt

School. Even Martín-Barbero, one of the founders of theories on mediation, took his Ph.D. in Leuven, Belgium and postdoctoral studies in anthropology and Semiotics at the School of Advanced Studies in Paris.

This is also evident from their respective academic trajectories. After being a student of Claude Lévi-Strauss for a year, Verón took up a professorship at the University of Buenos Aires, and also became the president of the Argentine Association of Semiotics until 1971. In that year, he returned to France as an associate director of the School for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences, where he conducted intensive research activities until 1996 when he again returned to Argentina. During this period Verón began developing his theories which were at the time published in French journals and books. Despite being a recognised researcher in the French-speaking world, his theories on mediatisation were not fully acknowledged in the field of communication research.

Upon his return to Argentina, Verón became a prominent figure at two top universities: the University of Buenos Aires and the National University of Rosario. Through the avenues of mediatisation and semiotics, a group of researchers from these universities started conducting research in dialogue with his theories, eventually forming the Center for Research in Mediatisation (CIM) at the National University of Rosario, and the International Center for Communication and Semiotics (CISECO), located in the northeast of Brazil, the latter formed by Verón together with researchers from the University of Buenos Aires (Oscar Traversa) and UNISINOS (Antônio Fausto Neto). These two centres fostered the lineage founded by Eliseo Verón in the last decade. A third institutional formation of importance was around the group of researchers from Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), centred around Antônio Fausto Neto, José Luiz Braga, Pedro Gilberto Gomes, Ana Paula da Rosa, and Jairo Ferreira.

At UNISINOS, mediatisation theory has again blended with European perspectives, through a link to the University of Grenoble and their research institute Gresec, with which collaboration was initiated in 2010, and among other things resulted in the International Research Seminars on Mediatisation and Social Processes, where meetings between European and Latin-American perspectives have systematically been orchestrated since then. One can note that communication research in Brazil has tended to reproduce concepts and methodologies from the "North" (structuralism, critical theory, semiotics, etc.). And while theories from the "South" (e.g. by Martin-Barbero 1997) have had difficulties in getting established in the anglophone spaces, perspectives from the "North" on reception (Morley, Stuart Hall, de Certeau, etc.) have successively become assimilated in the "South".

The various publications from the biennial conference International Seminar on Mediatisation and Social Processes have been published simultaneously in English and Portuguese (Ferreira et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2022a, 2022b). This dialogue between traditions also served as the starting point for a collaborative project between Brazilian and Swedish media researchers initiated in 2019, with dual funding from both countries and the aim of exploring possible connections between researchers and research traditions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

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The influx of ideas from structural anthropology, semiotics, critical theory, and Marxism among Latin American scholars has taken a somewhat different route than in Europe. The legacy of structuralism and Marxism in Europe has, within media and communication research, been filtered through British Cultural Studies, a research tradition that has itself bifurcated in the 1990s and early 2000s, and where the original ideas have faded slightly into the background to the benefit of less critical approaches in which the radical potentials of the early British Cultural Studies have become influenced by North American stances that are more affirmative of popular culture and everyday resistance.

In Latin American mediatisation research, these influences have also been mixed with new theoretical conceptualisations. One such concept is *circulation*, with a strong presence in Latin American theory. Circulation is a concept introduced by Verón (1987) in his *La semiosis social* and refers to the trajectory of signs and meanings through social space. Verón's influences come from Peircian semiotics and cover micro-analysis (the analysis of magazine covers, newspapers, a television program, etc.), meso-analysis (the analysis of music, records, pamphlets, e.g. Verón 2013), macro-analysis (relating television to post-modernity and mediatisation to fragmentation), and meta-analysis (e.g. Verón 2014), formulating the thesis about mediatisation as an anthropological condition of the species. His contribution to mediatisation theories began to take shape well before the formulations from the North, except for Baudrillard. Verón's theory of circulation has been further elaborated for the Internet and online world by Argentinian semiotician Mario Carlón (2020a). Carlón discusses circulation not only from a temporal perspective already laid out by Verón, but also as a circulation between different types of media technologies: traditional offline mass media, online media, and social and niche media (see also Carlón 2020b).

Another approach is developed by Muniz Sodré, who, from a philosophical anthropological perspective close to Marxist legacies and in dialogue with

Baudrillard's reflections on mediatisation (e.g. Baudrillard 1971). From a philosophical standpoint, Sodré (2006) argues that

> Mediatisation, thus, implies a particular qualification of life, a new way of the subject's presence in the world, or, considering the Aristotelian qualification of life forms, a specific *bios*. In his Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle conceives three forms of human existence (bios) in Pólis: bios *theoretikos* (contemplative life), bios *politikos* (political life), and bios *apolaustikos* (pleasant life). Mediatisation can be thought of as a new *bios*, a kind of fourth existential sphere, with its qualification (a "technoculture"), historically justified by the imperative to redefine the bourgeois public space. (Sodré, 2006: 22. Authors' translation)

In an approach closer to the Marxist legacy, robust in its critical formulations regarding the media, Sodré suggests:

> What is mediatisation? Certainly, it is not merely the transmission of events by the means of communication (as if the social event occurred first and then was mediated or reported by the media). Mediatisation is the articulated functioning of traditional social institutions with the media. Mediatisation does not tell us what communication is, and yet, it is the object *par excellence* of contemporary thought about social communication thinking, precisely because it supports the hypothesis of a sociocultural mutation centred on the current functioning of communication technologies. (Sodré, 2010: 11. Authors' translation)

From another perspective, José Luiz Braga has developed concepts and analyses of mediatisation based on influences from symbolic interactionism, pragmatism, and constructivism. For Braga,

> (…) the process of mediatisation (whose history is, naturally, much more complex and subject to contingent variations from country to country) would roughly correspond to this "evolution" from technical implementations in service of "prior" societal goals to auto-poietic derivations in the elaboration of their own logics. (Braga, 2006: 16. Authors' translation)

José Luiz Braga, Muniz Sodré, Ciro Marcondes (e.g. Marcondes Filho 2016), and Lucrécia Ferrara (2019) share a common interest in the relationships between communication and mediatisation. For these authors, the concept of mediatisation alone is not sufficient for understanding communication, and the concepts of communication from the social sciences and language studies are equally incomplete. They assert that the field of communication research should construct the concept of communication, both epistemologically and methodologically, to comprehend how communication relates to mediatisation.

Each of these researchers presents "solutions" in agonistic terms, an approach that may be more typically Brazilian than South American or European.

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The uses and appropriations of Verón have had major influences on empirical research in several directions. What is common in these directions? Circulation is the "shared object" from this epistemological "foundation". This shared object has formulations for empirical research that use its more "canonical" models (Mário Carlon, 2020; Natália Anselmino, 2020), whereas Fausto Neto (2022) makes variations on this model based on the analysis of discourse circulation, in a well-known work in the field of communication in Brazil. This path of discourse circulation analysis is also developed by Giovandro Ferreira (2015), although in a slightly different way compared to Fausto Neto. Ana Paula da Rosa (2019) also deals with this object but focuses on the circulation of images and imaginaries. Jairo Ferreira, in dialogue with critical theory, focuses on logics and symbolic power (from Lévi-Strauss to Bourdieu, passing through Marxism) for understanding media platforms and algorithms. The same goes for Viviane Borelli (2020) and Aline Dalmolin (2022). Without focusing on circulation alone, we can also place the works of Ada C. Machado da Silveira (2020a, 2020b, 2022) in this tradition.

With variations, the various Latin American perspectives establish a differentiation from the theories of mediations and reception inaugurated by Jesús Martín-Barbero. Martín-Barbero is not a theorist of mediatisation or circulation. In his foundational work, *Dos meios às mediações: comunicação. cultura e hegemonia* (1997), the term circulation is generic, without the same conceptual configuration as Verón. His reflection is constructed as a critique of the approach to the media developed by structuralism, semiotics, and informational-cybernetics, including criticism of Marxism and critical theory:

To think about the cultural industry, mass culture, from the perspective of hegemony implies a double break: with technologist positivism, which reduces communication to a problem of means, and with culturalist ethnocentrism, which assimilates mass culture to the problem of the degradation of culture. This double break relocates the problems in the space of relationships between cultural practices and social movements, that is, in the historical space. (Martín-Barbero, 1997: 125. Authors' translation)

For the understanding of this space, Martín-Barbero proposes that the focus of the investigation of media processes should be on mediations:

> Communication media histories continue – with few exceptions – to be dedicated to studying the "economic structure" or "ideological content" of the media, without minimally proposing the study of the mediations through which the media acquire institutional materiality and cultural density. We oscillate between paragraphs that seem to attribute the dynamics of historical changes to the influence of the media and others in which these are reduced to mere passive instruments in the hands of a class endowed with almost as much autonomy as a Kantian subject. (Martín-Barbero, 1997: 228. Authors' translation)

The historical importance of this formulation in South America, and especially in Brazil, is epistemological, methodological, and institutional. The critique of Marxism, critical theory, and structuralism, including its semiological aspect, provides a period of differentiation of epistemologies in the South concerning the theoretical legacies of the North, gaining space in research and educational institutions, and in the constitution of the epistemological field of communication in Brazil. Undoubtedly, this differentiation has opened a space for new theoretical trends in Brazilian communication research. In this process, the encounters between theories of mediation and mediatisation continue to be debated in Brazil (see Janotti Junior et al. 2012).

The European and Nordic Focus on Institutions, Technologies, and Symbolic Environments

The most common distinction made when describing European research on mediatisation is between an institutionalist and a social-constructivist approach. The institutional approach is represented by researchers such as Stig Hjarvard (2013), Jesper Strömbäck (2008), Winfried Schulz (2004) and others. The institutional approach focuses on the media as institutions, for example, the institutions of journalism and politics, but also institutions in the form of concrete mass media organisations. The time-frame of analysis is most often after the Second World War, when many countries saw the rise of powerful mass media organisations, and the approach is one of causality: the media institutions' impact on other institutional spheres in society, which to an increasing extent tweak their operations to fit with the logics and grammars of the media. Many scholars in this type of mediatisation research take inspiration from Altheide and Snow's (1979) well-cited book *Media Logic*. Strangely enough, the textual emphasis that Altheide and Snow have in their book has not been incorporated into institutional mediatisation theory, and thus the content of the media is written out of the analysis to the benefit of institutional practices such as, for example, the relationships between jour-

nalists and politicians (Johansson & Nygren 2018). But as Altheide and Snow themselves explain in their introduction,

[M]edia logic consists of a form of communication; the process through which media present and transmit information. Elements of this form include the various media and the formats used by these media. Format consists, in part, of how the material is organised, the style in which it is presented, the focus or emphasis on particular characteristics of behavior, and the grammar of media communication. Format becomes a framework or a perspective that is used to present as well as interpret phenomena. (Altheide and Snow 1979: 10)

This does, however, not mean that Altheide and Snow exclusively focus on media texts. As they explain in their subsequent book *Media Worlds in the Post-journalism Era*, they considered their approach an alternative to the dominance of textual analysis in the 1960s and 1970s (Altheide & Snow 1991: ixf). What they propose is a shift from content to form, and, in that sense, they are still occupied with the output of the media, and how the forms of communication that stem from, for example, the journalistic institution, affect other institutions. Gradually, however, the focus on textual forms has faded into the background of mediatisation research to the benefit of institutional practice.

The second main approach to mediatisation is the social-constructivist, which, along the lines of Berger and Luckmann's (1967) theory of the social construction of reality, which in its mediatised version becomes the "mediated construction of reality" (Couldry & Hepp 2017). This approach works with longer time scales, is less prone to adopt causal explanatory models, and has a broader view of what counts as media. The time perspective goes back to the early dawn of civilisation, to cave paintings and other forms of pictograms. This also means that all types of communication technologies, and not only the mass media followed from the invention of printing and onwards. The media are also considered an environment in which we live, and there is an emphasis on the relation between individuals and mediatised society. This means adopting a macro perspective, instead of the institutional approach, which can be said to be on the meso-level. The cultural-constructivist approach is holistic and considers the impact of the totality of the media, their institutions, and textual expressions. One of the main proponents of this perspective is Friedrich Krotz (2007), who argues that mediatisation should be seen as a similar historical process as globalisation, individualisation, and other meta-processes. Krotz was also very early in his theorising of the mediatisation approach, for example, in his book *Die Mediatisierung kommunikativen Handelns* (Krotz 2001).

In the main descriptions of the rise of European mediatisation theory, the two main approaches are considered to have been introduced in the late 1980s and onwards (see, e.g. the description in Asp 1990). There are, however, early

uses of the term mediatisation well before the late 1980s. In the early 1970s, Baudrillard (1971) was already theorising "l'information mediatisée" where he referred to mediatisation as a technological and semiotic process. Arguably, this approach could be labelled a techno-semiotic one, where the affordances and limitations of the media, on the one hand as technologies, and on the other, as semiotic systems where the codes and modes of operation of the sign system set up limits for what is possible to communicate. As argued elsewhere (Bolin 2023), this would bring a stronger communication perspective to mediatisation theory, as well as open for a stronger focus on the content structures and grammars of the media, much in line with Altheide and Snow's media logic approach, but without the institutional focus. In fact, Baudrillard explicitly denies the importance of the institutional, since his argument in "Réquiem pour les média" starts with a critique of Hans-Magnus Enzensberger's (1970) idea of what determines communication is the control over the means of production. To Baudrillard, this is irrelevant, since the technology itself as well as the semiotic codes, are more important (Baudrillard 1971; see also the more elaborate discussion in Bolin, 2024).

Other early uses of the concept of mediatisation appear among Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1990), albeit without him theorising it beyond the fact that people at the time of writing (1980s/1990s) were "permeated by media". It was, however, explicitly theorised by Swedish media studies professor Kjell Nowak, who argued already in the mid-1990s that the mediatisation process brings with it that communication occurs *within* an increasingly media-saturated environment, where new technologies are launched with accelerating frequency *through* which we communicate, using e-mail, SMS, and chat rooms, mobile phones, etc. Nowak also argued that we increasingly communicate *with* technology, which he saw as a new but increasingly central part of mediatisation. Nowak's main example was ELIZA, the famous natural language processing chatbot invented by MIT professor Joseph Weizenbaum in the mid-1960s, and he also foresaw an expansion of this relatively new form of communication (Nowak 1996: 164ff). His predictions were arguably fulfilled a decade and a half later with the introduction of Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa and Apple's "intelligent assistant" Siri, who "understands what you say, knows what you mean, and has the answers you need", as an early marketing slogan formulated it (quoted in Bolin, 2014: 189).

Nowak argued that there could be found four aspects of mediatisation. Firstly, he pointed to an increased dispersal of technologies and signs in our social environment. There is a steady increase in both communication technologies and media texts and messages (Nowak 1996: 161). Secondly, he argued that the media permeates and affects increasingly more areas of

society, an argument reminiscent of Hjarvard (2013), pointing to how societal institutions affect other societal domains. Thirdly, and more originally, Nowak argues that today, more and more things work *as* media in the sense that people more frequently and more self-consciously use things around them to express themselves. Nowak does not refer to the argument on mediatisation by Baudrillard, but in fact, this is much in line with Baudrillard's (1972/1981) thought on the importance of *sign value*, that is, the value that produces difference and status when consumed. For a teenager, having the latest iPhone model not only allows you to explore its exclusive functions but also signals the owner's status and style among his or her peers. Fourth, and last, Nowak argues that "social interaction between people is increasingly linked to the media environment [since] media products and their use often form the basis for community, sociality and the construction of group identities" (Nowak 1996: 162).

Arguably, Nowak's arguments in this far too seldom referenced article preceded many of the discussions and definitions debated over the past couple of decades. Nowak was, indeed, very alone at the time in explicitly theorising the mediatisation of culture and society, and few have picked up on his distinctions. In fact, he could be seen to have brought together the different approaches into a major mediatisation theory, that merged the institutional, the techno-semiotic, and the social-constructivist approaches. Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (2013: 196) have argued that these perspectives are now approaching one another, but in Nowak's writing they were never really separated, but internal dimensions of one and the same process.

As can be seen from the above, there are many interconnections between the Latin American and the European mediatisation approaches, but also major differences. Differences, however, are also the starting point for theoretical development, where new nuances can be added to the existing mediatisation theory palette. The next section accounts for the chapters in this book, where some suggested themes can contribute to a richer understanding of mediatised society are discussed in the North-South nexus.

Outline and Description of Chapters

The chapters in this book are the culmination of a collaboration between Södertörn University, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), and Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) from 2019 to 2023. They reflect the outcomes of four years of interaction between the Swedish and Brazilian research teams against the backdrop of significant global developments, including the COVID-19 pandemic, political changes in Sweden and Brazil,

international conflicts like the Russian-Ukraine War and the Israel-Hamas War, and the popularisation of new media technologies such as artificial intelligence, to name a few. The period was also notable for shifts in the academic landscape, such as the rapid move to digital learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of neoliberal policies on Brazilian universities leading to the closure of the Communication Sciences post-graduate program at UNISINOS in 2022, and the expansion of higher education in Sweden since the pandemic. The chapters explore these issues not just as scholarly reactions to external events, but through the lens of mediatisation that highlights the pivotal role of media and circulation processes in shaping our understanding and perceptions of the world, underscoring the relevance of media and communication in the contemporary analysis of politics, culture, and society.

Most of these chapters were presented in their early stages either during online seminars during the COVID-19 pandemic, at hybrid higher seminars at Södertörn University, and the *Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais* at UFSM in Santa Maria, Brazil in December 2022. In the early stages of elaboration, each researcher has benefitted from peer feedback and discussions among the group, suggesting the exploration of the similarities and differences between European and Latin American mediatisation traditions as outlined earlier in this introduction, and exploring potential synergies. As such, each of the chapters in the four sections *Epistemologies*, *Extensions*, *Empirical Excavations*, and *Experiences* present different ways in which the European/Nordic and Latin American traditions of mediatisation intersect and also complement one another while offering critical perspectives on the future of mediatisation studies from a North-South perspective.

The chapters in *Part I: Epistemologies* explore overarching concepts concerning mediatisation and address challenges in performing mediatisation research from social media platforms, to algorithms, communication theories on complexity, and the challenges of digitalisation, datafication, and mediatisation of education and the public sector.

In "The Metric Mindset", Göran Bolin (Södertörn University), contends that in contemporary datafied media landscapes, metrics have become so naturalised in the digital environment that media users no longer reflect on their visibility, nor their operability. Nonetheless, metrics direct user attention in various directions in digital space, towards other users, advertising, promotional messages, political opinion, etc. However, in everyday life users rarely reflect on how metrics steer attention, perceptions, and mindsets, and, following from this, how they privilege certains types of behaviours. Bolin asks, how can we research the 'metric mindsets' of users if metrics have become so natural to us as water to the fish? How can media users be sensitised to the meaning of

metrics and measurement? The chapter first reflects on the meanings that metrics might have for media users, and secondly, how these meanings can be researched empirically with a special focus on the functionality of metrics for social media users, and the affordances of various social media platforms.

In "Algorithms Between Material Being and Cultural Form: Circulation as a Challenge to Simulations in Maps Territories and Social Classifications", Jairo Ferreira (UNISINOS/UFSM) looks into the intricate interplay between algorithms, simulations, maps, territories, and social classifications, elucidating how these elements shape and challenge our understanding of reality and culture. Drawing from theoretical frameworks spanning Ferreira explores the convergence of computational logic and cultural classifications, revealing the complexities inherent in processes of mediation and semiosis. As simulations of mental processes, algorithms serve as both maps and territories, constructing representations of reality while also influencing and being influenced by it. Ferreira highlights the historical lineage of algorithms, tracing their origins from natural cognitive maps observable in various animal species to the abstract logic of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, the chapter examines the role of classification logics in shaping digital platforms and social interactions, critiquing the hierarchical tendencies embedded within algorithmic classification systems. It discusses instances of racial bias in search engine classifications and explores the implications of these classifications on societal perceptions and representations of racialised populations. This leads to how the dynamics of circulation and political resistance within digital platforms intersect, and how alternative classifications emerge and interact with institutionalised algorithms. Ferreira argues that processes of abduction, or, inferential reasoning derived from cultural algorithms, play a crucial role in challenging and reconceptualising existing classifications and territories.

In light of the complexity of metrics and algorithms presented by Bolin and Ferreira, Viviane Borelli (UFSM) and Heike Graf (Södertörn University) propose a reading of how to navigate complexity from an epistemological approach. They posit that in a world increasingly shaped by mediatisation and digitalisation, understanding and managing complexity in communication processes become crucial tasks for researchers. In "How to Manage Complexity? Observing the Observers: Luhmann and Verón", they explore the approaches of Niklas Luhmann and Eliseo Verón to managing complexity in communication and the production of meaning. Luhmann's social systems theory emphasises the role of communication in societal order, viewing communication as a problem-solving process influenced by media. Verón, on the other hand, focuses on semiotics and the production of meaning, emphasising the significance of signs and discursive circulation. Through an examination of their work coming from

distinct yet complementary perspectives, the authors elucidate how Luhmann and Verón address complexity through concepts such as autopoiesis, structural couplings, and the role of the observer in the dynamics of communication systems. By drawing parallels between their perspectives, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of complexity seen from theories considered foundational approaches in mediatisation in the North-South axis.

In the era of digital transformation of education, P. Pedro Gomes (UNISINOS) explores the concept of the smart campus emerging as a response to the evolving dynamics of society and technology, focusing on the intersection of digital innovation, mediatisation, and the changing landscape of higher education institutions (HEIs). Drawing from insights in philosophy, theology, and the social sciences, in "The Time of the Smart Campus", Gomes navigates through the complexities of digital culture and its implications for university life and examines the challenges and opportunities presented by the integration of digital technologies in academia, particularly in the context of "smart" campuses. The author brings the experience of universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, which catalysed the digital transformation of universities which necessitates the reimagining of pedagogical models, as well as the need for a holistic approach that transcends mere technological advancements in the process of digitalisation and mediatisation. As HEIs navigate this digital landscape, questions arise regarding the preservation of the university's identity amidst rapid technological development, and calls for embracing the transformative potential of digital culture while safeguarding the human dimension in higher education.

Also focusing on education, Michael Forsman, from Södertörn University, explores the concept of digital competence as a boundary concept within the mediatisation of the future of education, particularly focusing on the Swedish context. In "Digital Competence as a Boundary Concept in the Mediatisation of the Future of (Swedish) Education", the author examines the concept of digital competence as a regulative adjustment to rapid digitalisation and a critical response to deep mediatisation, from a non-media-centric perspective on the institutional relations between education and digital mediatisation. Forsman draws on Stieg Hjarvard's institutional approach to mediatisation and incorporates elements of anticipatory governance, soft power, and sociotechnical imaginaries. Through a conceptual analysis rooted in linguistic, political, and historical perspectives, the chapter investigates how the concept of digital competence becomes reified and permeates political language and public discourse, ultimately influencing major organisations, movements, and everyday life. By positioning digital competence within the framework of foundational concepts,

the study highlights its descriptive and regulative roles in shaping debates and processes related to the future of education in the digital age.

Closing this section, in "Digital Frictions", Anne Kaun (Södertörn University) proposes a reflection on the historical trajectory of the welfare state from its inception to its dissolution of ideals, and how it has evolved in the digital age. Based on fieldwork conducted within European contexts, especially Sweden, the chapter explores the emergence of the digital welfare state and its implications for societal well-being. Through citizen narratives gathered during fieldwork, the chapter illustrates instances of digital frictions within welfare systems, highlighting the challenges faced by marginalised individuals in navigating digital infrastructures. These frictions, rather than mere obstacles, are seen as opportunities for understanding societal inequalities and reimagining welfare provision in more inclusive and equitable ways. Building on theoretical frameworks of welfare and digitalisation, Kaun discusses the concept of digital frictions as productive sites for societal resilience and resistance against dominant power structures. It argues against socio-technical imaginaries founded on a frictionless digital welfare machine, advocating instead for embracing the complexities and tensions inherent in digital interactions. Urging a reevaluation of the role of digital tools in welfare provision, the chapter calls for a collective reimagining of welfare systems that prioritise human needs and capabilities over technological solutions.

In *Part II: Extensions*, drawing from their extended research stays at Södertörn University in Sweden in 2022 and 2023, Professors Ada C. Machado da Silveira (UFSM), Aline Roes Dalmolin (UFSM), and Ana Paula da Rosa (UFRGS, formerly UNISINOS), used their time as visiting researchers to deepen perspectives and gain new insights into their ongoing long-term research projects. All three focused on the contingencies of war, securitisation, and disinformation logics within different processes of mediatisation such as the circulation of discourses related to conflicts in social media platforms, images, and imaginaries in contested political scenarios.

In her chapter "The Mediatisation of Violence in Brazil: Drifts of War and Securitisation", Ada C. Machado da Silveira (UFSM) examines the intricate web of mediatisation processes surrounding violence in Brazil, exploring the interplay between discourses of war and securitisation in shaping public perceptions and policy responses. Drawing on a rich array of data and analysis, the author examines how violence is constructed, disseminated, and understood in Brazilian society, juxtaposing it with international contexts such as the Russia-Ukraine War. Through a nuanced exploration of mediatisation processes, including datafication and communicational dynamics, the chapter illuminates the complexities of navigating domestic conflicts while projecting a Brazilian

image of peace on the global stage. By highlighting the divergent perspectives of different forms of war discourses in the media and the impact of mediatisation on social subjectivity, the text provides valuable insights into the challenges and implications of framing public security in Brazil's mediatised landscape and in a global context.

In "The Circulation of Disinformation on Platforms in Brazil", Aline Roes Dalmolin explores the phenomenon of disinformation that has emerged as a multifaceted global challenge, profoundly impacting various societal domains. Her chapter explores the circulation of disinformation on digital platforms, particularly within the context of mediatisation and platformisation processes connected to specific political events related to the rise of the extreme right in Brazil. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as mediatised society and platformisation, the chapter examines the intertwined dynamics of disinformation, hate speech, and political polarisation in the country. The author looks into historical roots of disinformation and relates it to contemporary manifestations exacerbated by digital technologies and social media platforms, and the specific challenges posed by the Brazilian socio-political landscape. By situating the discussion within the broader context of global disinformation phenomena and the unique characteristics of platform usage in Brazil and in the Global South, this chapter allows us to further unpack the circulation of disinformation also in the Global North.

In the realm of mediatised warfare, the circulation of images serves as a crucial mechanism for shaping perceptions and meanings about conflicts. Ana Paula da Rosa's chapter "Operations of a Mediatised War: From 'Body-Images' in Circulation to Boards in the Abyss" situates her investigation in the dynamics of image circulation in crisis and conflict situations, such as the Russia-Ukraine War, and investigates how images of conflict operate as agents of meaning within the process of mediatisation. By using a critical art theoretical approach combined with Eliseo Verón's concept of circulation and conflict studies, she analyses an array of images and audiovisual materials disseminated via digital media platforms, news outlets, and social actors regarding conflict situations. The author identifies three key image operations: image-trickery, image-circuit, and image-resistance, that underscore the intricate relationship between images, circulation, and the construction of war narratives. She then creatively uses the concept of panels inspired by art historian Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Picture Atlas* (1924) to synthesise her findings. In doing so, she sheds light on the complex interplay between media, visual culture, and the mediatisation of conflict, thus offering insights into the evolving nature of contemporary warfare in the digital age.

In *Part III: Empirical Excavations*, the chapters written by visiting post-doctoral researchers and doctoral students from the Brazilian partner universities highlight timely responses to historical and media phenomena during their research residencies at Södertörn University, where mediatisation approaches from the North and South have been incorporated, reflected upon, and further problematised. Benefitting from joint supervision by their home universities and faculty at Södertörn, they dove into current affairs such as the Russia-Ukraine War (in the phase begun in 2022), the popularisation of AI technologies in the spring of 2023, the ongoing mediatisation of newsrooms that reflects changes in media work, and the intersection of gender performativity, culture, and politics in the tense Brazilian electoral context in 2022.

Taking stock of the newsworthiness of the Russia-Ukraine War in global headlines since February 2022, Camila Hartmann (UFSM) presents the findings of a quantitative analysis on the mediatisation of the conflict as depicted on the front pages of two prominent newspapers, *Folha de S.Paulo* in Brazil and *Dagens Nyheter* in Sweden. The study titled "Ongoing War Narratives: Mediatisation of the Russia-Ukraine War in Brazilian and Swedish Newspapers' Front Pages" intended as a thesis chapter for her doctoral degree, spans one year, from the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 to 23 February 2023, aiming to compare and contrast the front-page coverage of the conflict between these two countries. The analysis was co-supervised by Ada Machado Silveira (UFSM) and Göran Bolin (Södertörn University), and looks into the theoretical understanding of mediatisation and its implications for wartime scenarios, drawing from diverse theoretical traditions in Latin America and Europe. Additionally, the study provides insights into the war-related data and details about Russian and Ukrainian immigration in Brazil, highlighting the significance of researching this topic in a multicultural context.

Mauricio Fanfa's chapter "Unpacking Notions of Anxiety Scepticism and Technological Solutionism: Analysis of Public Debates on Artificial Intelligence in the Swedish Newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*", investigates the public discourse surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) in the Swedish press during May 2023, when opinion-building about AI technologies reached mass audiences. As a visiting post-doctoral researcher from UFSM at Södertörn University between August and November 2023, and supervised by Jonas Andersson Schwarz (Södertörn University) Fanfa explored the vivid public debates about AI technologies in the Swedish daily press. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of cosmotechnics and technodiversity, the study explores the interplay of anxiety, scepticism, and solutionism within the context of public perception of artificial intelligence. Drawing inspiration from mediatisation theory and sociotechnical imaginaries, the analysis navigates through the cultural landscapes of Sweden

and Brazil, shedding light on how technology is perceived and debated in different sociocultural contexts. Through a meticulous examination of opinion pieces and letters from readers, the paper uncovers nuanced perspectives that transcend simplistic binaries, revealing a complex tapestry of societal attitudes toward AI.

Concerned with the ongoing digitalisation of newsrooms on a global scale, Marcio Morrison's chapter "Mediatised Newsrooms in Sweden and Brazil and Their Impacts on the Journalism Profession" is a comparative study that explores the impact of mobile device integration on journalistic practices within the framework of mediatisation. As a visiting doctoral student from UNISINOS at Södertörn University in 2022–23, and jointly supervised by Ana Paula da Rosa (UFRGS, formerly UNISINOS) and Stina Bengtsson and Per Ståhlberg (Södertörn University), Morrison investigates how symbiotic relationships between journalists and mobile devices reshape newsroom dynamics and professional routines. Through in-depth interviews with journalists in Sweden, the chapter reveals a transition from traditional newsroom spaces to virtual environments, where mobile devices facilitate instantaneous reporting and collaboration. However, the findings illustrate the emergence of mediatised newsrooms characterised by tensions produced by constant connectivity and a blurring of boundaries between work and leisure. The author contends that while symbiotic relationships with digital technologies offer benefits such as flexibility and speed, they also raise concerns about digital dependency and its psychosomatic effects in the everyday life of media workers such as journalists.

Like Hartmann and Morrison, Rodrigo Duarte, a visiting doctoral student from UNISINOS in 2023–24, used his research stay at Södertörn University to refine aspects of his doctoral research on circulation, mediatisation, gender and performativity, jointly supervised by Ana Paula da Rosa (UFRGS, formerly UNISINOS) and Isabel Löfgren (Södertörn University). His chapter, co-authored with Ana Paula da Rosa, is likewise a response to the tensions of current events such as the 2022 general elections in Brazil which marked a turning point in national and global affairs. Their chapter "Circulating the Most Beloved Towel in Brazil: Pabllo Vittar's Drag Performativity Between Politics and Entertainment" examines the intersection of politics and entertainment through Brazilian drag artist Pabllo Vittar's performance at a popular music festival in 2022, where the display of a towel featuring then-presidential candidate Luís Inácio Lula da Silva's image became a symbol of political expression and cultural resistance. Highlighting the mediatisation aspects of this event, the chapter analyses the circulation of meanings and the broad impact of Vittar's performative act across digital and social media platforms, igniting debates about censorship, and its multiple reverberations in public discourse. It delves

into the dynamics of political performativity within entertainment spaces, exploring how such acts challenge boundaries between art and politics and foster a complex interaction between media, artists, and the public. Through an exploration of mediatisation theories, social practices, and the performative role of images, the study reveals the evolving landscape of political engagement and celebrity cultures in the digital era, emphasising the potency of performance as a medium for political discourse and action.

In the final section of the book, *Part IV: Experiences*, Isabel Löfgren (Södertörn University), who also served as the Research Coordinator for the Capes-STINT research exchange, presents an in-depth look at the dynamics of the exchange program itself, focusing on researcher mobility and North-South internationalisation of academia. Writing from a unique Swedish-Brazilian viewpoint and adopting an essayistic style, Löfgren draws upon the philosophical insights of Lévinas, Derrida, and Vilém Flusser on hospitality, communication, exile, and nomadism to explore the host-guest dynamics experienced during the reception of eight Brazilian scholars specialising in mediatisation from UNISINOS and UFSM in Sweden. Löfgren compares the physical movement of scholars across the world to Verón's circulation of meanings, suggesting that these visiting academics embody a form of circulation as they transport and generate new meanings through their lived experiences in a foreign academic context. Through firsthand narratives of each visiting researcher's stay at Södertörn University between 2022 and 2024, she illustrates how internationalisation and researcher mobility transcend formal institutional frameworks and embody a series of hospitable interactions between hosts and guests that require affective labour and an ethics of care. This approach not only brings a human element to the forefront of mediatisation research but also sheds light on the often-ignored aspects of epistemic inequalities and asymmetries in the field, as well the productive tensions that arise both in international efforts to foster knowledge exchange on mediatisation theory production and in the processes of mediatisation themselves, from a global perspective.

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I
Epistemologies

The Metric Mindset: The Social Functionality of Social Media

Göran Bolin[1]

Metrics and technologies of measurement have become an increasingly important feature of our everyday 'media life' (Deuze 2012) in surveillance capitalism (Zuboff 2015). Metrics, it is argued, have become 'an environment in which we live […] an "air" that we breathe, an atmospheric component of society' (Brighenti 2018: 25). In this environment increasingly many domains have become measurable through social networking media, constantly reminding media users of their metric status when it comes to amounts of followers, friends, contacts, notifications, and constantly prompting media users to respond to metric triggers. It is well established in the sociology of measurement that people, as well as institutions, react and change behaviour when being measured (Espeland & Sauder 2007), and following from processes of metrification, it has been suggested a shift in the attitudes and mindsets of media users where the algorithmic principles of data capture on the Internet and the metrics associated with social networking sites would produce a 'big data mindset' (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier 2013: 129; van Dijck 2014), or a 'metricated mindset' (Bolin & Andersson Schwarz 2015). A metricated mindset would suggest an increased inclination to quantify human relations, knowledge, and friendships, that is, social life as such, and such arguments have been developed theoretically (e.g. Grosser 2014, van Dijck 2013), but there are few empirical studies of how metrics affect perception or behaviour. The transformative nature of increased metrification would presumably produce a certain type of disposition to act toward others and the surrounding world, revealing itself in ways of evaluating social actions and relations.

Now, if metrics are so naturalised in our everyday life that they appear as 'an air that we breathe', we need methodological tools to capture their impact. How

[1] Professor in Media and Communication Studies, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden. This is a substantially extended version of an argument published as "The Metric Mindset: Social Life in Datafied Media Landscapes" in Jairo Ferreira, Pedro Gilberto Gomes, Ana Paula da Rosa, Antônio Fausto Neto & José Luiz Braga (eds.) (2022) *Mediatized Sapiens – Communicational Knowledge in the Constitution of the Species*. Santa Maria: FACOS–UFSM, pp. 99–112.

can we research the increasingly metrified and algorithmically steered media landscape? And how can we research the perceptions of metrics, and how metrics are acted on among everyday media users? How can we make a nuanced understanding of metrics also considering that metrics are diverse and appear in different technological and social contexts? This paper aims to discuss an approach for responding to these questions and suggest a model for analysing metrics in everyday, routinised life. Furthermore, the paper will provide some examples of how one can use manipulated software that removes metrics from the users' interface to sensitise users to the functions of metrics. In the next section will be given a more detailed background to the rise of metrics and audience measurement, and how metrics have been used for producing value in the wider sense of the word.

Audience Measurement, Mindset and Social Agency

Although metrics, and technologies of measurement, have been around since the invention of writing (Hacking 1990), the rise of statistics in the mid-19th century meant a new phase in the development of measurement (Porter 1986), impacting how the world is perceived and predicted, producing a mindset against which humans orient and act in social space. Digitisation has arguably fuelled this development, introducing real-time algorithmic measurement in online spaces, building on continuously larger datasets, and new ways of calculating data, which have allowed for the synchronisation of sets of data on unprecedented scales. Digitisation has thus provided an increased penetration of metrics in all spheres of life (Beer 2016), and to understand the wider social and cultural consequences of this should be of sociological relevance.

Metrics, as used in this paper, refer to a 'standard of measurement' (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This standard is produced through measurement, and one can say that metrics are the result of the practice of measurement. Measurement has an epistemological dimension as it fixates and preserves events in space and time. However, some aspects of reality do not lend themselves to the simplification and reduction measurement requires, and thus they remain invisible. Metrics express *some* dimensions of events, rather than others. They constitute an image of reality, mediated, that media users see and are invited to react to.

Within the culture and media industries metrics have mainly concerned audience measurement. Within the commercial media, the interest in 'knowing one's audience' has been a central part of the business models developed from the traditional mass media (Bjur 2014), but with digitisation, new business models developed building on algorithmically processed audience statistics (Bermejo 2009, Buzzard 2012). While traditional mass media adjusted to this

new situation, the new-born digital media already from their start were constructed to work in metric-based production environments (Bolin 2011, Kennedy 2016; Beer 2018, Gould 2014). This has privileged new ways for the media to relate to their audiences, with new textual strategies developed, e.g. click-bait journalism (Molyneux & Coddington 2020), new 'like economies' (Gerlitz & Helmond 2013), and new work practices also among traditional media corporation (Cristin 2020) – all of which are centred on metrics.

From the media production perspective, metrics have most often been used for producing economic value (through, for example, the construction of the audience commodity). Following pragmatist philosopher John Dewey (1939), it seems more rewarding to theorise value in both its essence (what it is) and how it is arrived at (the practice of valuation) – that is, both as a noun and as a verb. Metrics represent a form of valuation, and to produce metrics is to arrive at the 'worth' of something, the measure assumed in the practice of valuation (Magendanz 2003), according to the philosophical principle 'What counts – in the sense of what is valued – is that which is counted' (Badiou 2008: 2; see also Gerlitz 2016). In practices of valuation economic value often has a privileged position, where metrics translate qualitative value forms into numerical (economic) value – the 'currency' that media producers speak of when they translate audience ratings into the worth of the audience commodity, or the 'traffic commodity' that social media platform owners trade-in. Metrics represent a sort of rationality where most things converge into economic thinking in media production (Baym 2013), and when sociability becomes metricated along the nexus of values privileged by the social media industries (Bolin 2022), it motivates research on how media users make sense of these metrics in their everyday media use, which values are produced in this process, and which social actions and relations are privileged.

Metrics, however, is not a unified entity. With Andrejevic (2018), it is possible to distinguish between two basic kinds of metrics related to social media: representational and operational metrics. *Representational metrics* are bits of numerical information that the media user is directly confronted with on the social media interface: the number of friends or followers accounted for, likes, retweets, interactions, etc. *Operational metrics* are the numerical information that is collected based on media user movement in social space, the history of search, and the navigational information that is collected about the user, but that is not revealed to the user while surfing the web. These are the metrics that form the basis for what type of content or advertising the user is presented with. Both types of metrics impact on and trigger behaviour, but they do so in different ways, and with different degrees of openness concerning the user.

Naturally, also representational metrics have an operational function, which means that from the perspective of those who control traffic on the platform, there is little difference – both forms of metrics can be used for profiling the user and controlling the ads, offers, etc., he or she will be targeted with, which search results will appear on top, or which friends s/he is encouraged to interact with. For the user, however, only the representational metrics appear as immediately actionable, and although users produce heuristics of how the algorithm works (Bolin & Velkova 2020), and how they privilege certain behaviours before others, they only do so through trial and error and are less in control.

Metrics thus have a bearing on how people navigate not only the social web but also how people navigate in social life more generally. When we act socially as individuals, we do so based on how we perceive the world around us, and how we understand the social context in which we are in. These perceptions form a specific mindset, and how our minds are set will impact our actions in social space, what possibilities we see and act on, and what options appear for us as impossible to act on. Our mindsets are thus of importance for social action.

A mindset is, according to Merriam-Webster, 'a mental attitude or inclination', or a 'fixed state of mind'. It is a specific form of 'cognitive habitat' (Pettitt 2013) forming our perceptions of the world, and hence has an impact on our dispositions to act in that world according to the principle laid out in the so-called Thomas theorem, that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences' (Thomas & Thomas 1928: 572). This means that if we perceive social relations in a specific way, we will act based on those perceptions and presumptions that are formed in our minds, and we will value social relations according to this mindset. One can thus study people's mindsets by analysing how individuals value social relations, that is, how social subjects express value orientations. One can, of course, also study people's mindsets based on how they act, but these actions need to be combined with people's motivations for these actions. Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013: 129f) use the concept of 'big data mindset' to point to how certain entrepreneurs seize business opportunities for application production, based on a market analysis of what types of wants can be exploited. José van Dijck has a broader understanding of this phenomenon, relating to how 'both users and owners can game the platform' (van Dijck 2014: 200). However, neither of these scholars theorises the concept further beyond these observations.

Taking the point of departure in such a broader understanding of what a metric mindset might be, one can think of it as related to an individual's *habitus*: the set of durable dispositions for acting in the world, acquired over the life course through formal and informal education, and social experiences more

generally (Bourdieu 1980/1992). These dispositions are in themselves based on distinctions, and classifications of others in social space (Bourdieu 1979/1989), similar to how Lévi-Strauss (1962/1983) argues that human action is based on classifications. However, we theorise mindset as a more malleable disposition compared to the habitus; weaker and more flexible about changes in social conditions. This is then *a sociological* or *anthropological approach* to studying how metrics impact people's mindsets (rather than psychological). Just as with the habitus, it is also reasonable to think that a metric mindset develops slowly over time, and is most likely more deeply integrated into an individual's social dispositions to act if acquired from an early age.

The epistemological problems of studying both mindset and habitus are the same: one needs to combine the study of action with the study of attitude and inclination. In the next section, some examples will be given of how the expressions of a metric mindset can be studied.

Expressions of Metric Mindsets

If metrics make up an environment in which we live and are integrated and naturalised in our everyday lives, how can they then be researched? How can we explore how media users' minds are directed towards metrics, and how can we know that behaviours change due to metrics? One way to study this is to sensitise media users to the metrics to prompt them to think of their role in everyday life and ask people about their ways of relating to metrics in an interview. Interviews, however, have the disadvantage of producing simulated or hypothetical arguments about behaviour. On many occasions, the attitude or behaviour accounted for is generalised on the background of quite general perception of a medium. Another way to prompt media users to think about their relation to metrics is to use manipulated software that alters or interferes with the interfaces of social media. With the help of an extension called the Demetricator, developed by artist Ben Grosser (2014), we conducted an experiment where media users agreed to install the Demetricator for several days, and then account for their experiences in an interview.[2] The Demetricator is an

[2] The pilot experiment was conducted together with a group of MA students in 2018 and has since been repeated with other groups of students. In this article, only quotes from the 2018 study will be used, and only in relation to the Facebook Demetricator, since these informants have consented to have their interview quotes used for publication purposes. The quotes are anonymised, and neither age nor gender is indicated, as this is of minor importance in this context. We have since made the same type of experiment with the Twitter and Instagram Demetricator. All extensions can be downloaded from Ben Grosser's web site bengrosser.com. The full methodology is accounted for in Bolin & Velkova (2020).

extension for web browsers such as Chrome, Firefox, etc., that, when toggled on, removes all metrics from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or TikTok. By having users install this on their computers, they are, as Grosser himself explains his plug-in, invited to try the system without numbers' (Grosser 2014). Facebook has since 2020 changed its interface to prevent the Demetricator from working on the platform, but it still works for Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Facebook, however, is much more metricated than the other applications, which means that the consequence for removing the metrics is larger on this site compared to others. While Twitter's representational metrics are limited to the number of likes, retweets, and replies, Instagram to likes and comments, and TikTok to likes, comments and shares, Facebook's interface also includes the number of messages, notifications, and a range of other metrics. All platforms include a timestamp, indicating when an item was posted. While timestamps can be argued are not a metric, it is numerical information and add to the amount of numbers on the screen. And, as exemplified below, they are indeed important for the orientation of the platform user. Although the representational metrics have decreased since Grosser made his Facebook Demetricator in 2012 (see the 2012 example in Grosser 2014: 3), it is still the platform that has the most metrics visible.

Comparing the user experiences between the platforms, one can also see that the metrics fulfil different functions, depending on the affordances of the application and the user habits developed about them. In the following part of this section, I will give some examples of user experiences, which reveal the functionality of metrics, and how they guide perceptions and, in the longer run, behaviour. In short, responding to the question: 'How does a metric mindset reveal in the reported experiences of everyday media users when sensitised to the metric functionality through the removal of metrics from social media interfaces?' The interview sample is small – eight informants, who were trying the Demetricator and were then interviewed on their experience. Such a small sample does, of course, not allow for any sort of generalisations, but it can reveal if it is at all possible to see if metrics have an impact on mindsets and behaviour. Epistemologically, we were more interested in the spectrum of behaviour, and not the most common patterns of use.

Elsewhere, I have discussed some of the experiences of media users of removing metrics in terms of temporal, social, and value-related disorientations (Bolin & Velkova 2020), and in this context, I would like to expand on that analysis. The various disorientations are expressed in interviews, for example about the 'newness' of posts:

> The time thing was very difficult. Automatically, when something appears on your feed, it is new. However, when you wanted to dig in, it was impossible. It was very difficult for me to know how old the post was. Oh, and also, I wanted to check someone's birthday, and guess what! The date wasn't showing up, so I was thinking: 'Oh, no, what am I going to do now?

This user expresses frustration over not being able to orient in time due to the lack of the time stamp that each post is equipped with. As Facebook's news feed is not chronologically organised as a default, posts uploaded at different times can appear in a random temporal order, and the knowledge of this makes users confused about which post is new and which is not. Since social conventions for communication expect us to remember our friends' birthdays, the lack of exact knowledge about when that is for each friend blocks action and prevents the user from losing face by sending congratulations on the wrong date.

Temporal disorientation also relates to certain valuation practices among media users. The value of news, for example, is that it is new. Nothing is as old as yesterday's goes a popular saying, and this is a practice that also relates to the social conventions around newsworthiness.

> [I]t did change my perception of how newsworthy or important something was when just scrolling through. If you see that a post has twenty thousand likes and see something that has less, I at least, rank them, and some news will appear to be more important. Then I will read it before reading another less important article because there is so much information. I found that difficult.

Journalists often refer to the news value of the stories they tell, which includes, besides relevance and public interest, the importance of a news item in terms of how 'fresh' it is. This doxa also feeds into the discourse around news and becomes a social convention that you also risk losing face over if you do not recognise, for example by sharing an old news story on your feed, and revealing that you did not know that it was several weeks old. If you have done that you run the risk of being considered 'out of time' and non-informed about the recent happenings of the day around the world (whichever that is).

News value in terms of 'relevance' or 'public interest' is also revealed among media users as amounts of engagement with a post in the news feed. And if the amount of engagement cannot be determined by a user, he or she also gets disoriented, as in this combined quote from two informants:

> It's interesting to see what the majority thinks because then I can see if it's worth my time to look at…
>
> You want to know how popular the page is before giving it a like.

As can be seen from these quotes, metrics represent popularity, and the two quotes illustrate two different approaches to that. The first quote indicates a kind of temporal economics, whereby the informant uses metrics as indicators of worthwhileness (cf. Schrøder 2015). The second quote expresses something similar, but also slightly different since it points to the popularity of the post in quantitative terms. If the first example points to the value for the user, a sort of orientation in a media landscape of textual overabundance, the second points to the social dimension of fitting in with the larger social collective, to confirm the commonality with other fellow social media users. This is an outward-oriented act, whereas the first quote represents an inward, value-oriented approach.

In a way, the second quote also expresses an approach that can work suppressively, an anxiety of being alone with one's value judgement that can be seen as similar to a 'spiral of silence' where the suspicion of being alone in liking the post prevents the user from revealing his or her standpoint, and the simply refrains from giving voice to any opinion at all (Noelle-Neumann 1974). In a way, this also illustrates the social nature of social media. This social nature was also noted by one of our informants.

> I felt it strange, and as I said earlier, I became almost annoyed. Or frustrated maybe. /…/ I think that social media without these interactions removes a rather large part of 'the social', or how should I say… It is also interesting how rooted this is in people, and how important that bit is. I did not know that.

This type of reflexivity is not very common as media users navigate the Internet in their everyday lives; It has to be provoked, or triggered, for example in an experimental situation such as the one we arranged for our informants. Through this manipulation, users are sensitised to the role metrics play in how they approach social media platforms, and how they act on them. It is only through the disruption of the flow of the everyday that one can prompt people to think about such routine behaviour. Similarly to how Andrea Mubi Brighenti sees metrics as 'an atmospheric component of society', we do not go around reflecting on our relation to metrics, just as we do not go around and think about the 'air that we breathe' very often. In late modern 'media life' (Deuze 2012), the media around us are so naturalised in all our activities, that they appear to us as water to the fish, or indeed, as air to humans.

The Functionality of Metrics

The previous section accounted for some responses to the use of Facebook in demetricated mode. However, as already indicated, the Demetricator can also be used with Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Metrics, however, have different

functionalities depending on which platform they operate on, and since representational metrics prompt behaviour, metrics also work differently, and privilege a variety of responses depending on the type of platform and the design of the interface. Compared to Facebook, for example, Twitter has fewer representational metrics, restricted to likes, retweets, and replies on the actual tweet, and to the number of followers, notifications, tweets, and retweets made if a Twitter account is further analysed (and depending on which interface one uses (e.g. TweetDeck on the laptop, or the Twitter app on the smartphone). Instagram has even fewer metrics on its main interface, although just like Twitter, there are more metrics to be found if one clicks around on the individual Twitter accounts.

There are some studies of the functionality of the Facebook "like" button (e.g. Sumner et al. 2018), but not much research has compared metric functionality between different social media. From a comparative perspective, Michael Bosetta (2018) discusses the functionality of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, focussing on 'how content is mediated, accessed, and distributed across platforms', that is, more from the perspective of the platform's affordances, rather than based in user experience (Bosetta 2018: 476). Bosetta distinguishes five types of functionalities: hardware, graphical user interface, broadcast feed, supported media, and cross-platform integration. In terms of representational and operational features of the medium, the representational metrics relate to how the graphical user interface is designed, how the metrics are distributed, and what they trigger in terms of user action. The broadcast feed, which one can assume also includes advertising and pop-up windows, is more related to the operational metrics, that distribute content depending on user action.

Now, the quotes in the previous section all relate to the social functions of metrics and how the graphical interface has been modified by the Demetricator. As points of orientation, the like button on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are seemingly fulfilling the same function of orientation as it does on Facebook, that is, giving guidance to how popular – and thus important – other social media users are, or which posts that should be worthy of attention.

For more special uses of social media, such as the professional use by influencers, and those who try to form opinions, the metrics are a working tool to mark grades of success, indicating which types of tweets or Instagram posts are effective in each situation. Especially for social media influencers, the popularity function is an important marker of success and the resource determining their value in the influencer market.

Conclusion: Metric Mindsets and the Meaning of Measurement

In the above, I have presented and discussed an approach to study the impact of metrics on everyday media use. A special focus has been on how metrics impact the mindset and social action of users. This approach has included using software manipulation combined with traditional interviews with media users. It is concluded that such experimental methodologies help reveal some of the unreflected relations to metrics in everyday life, the meanings produced by users, as well as their reflections around them. For everyday social media users, the like button and other metrics function as points of orientation, and the removal of metrics removes the most important feature of the medium. However, the limited scope of the empiric material used in this paper, although promising, also reveals that research needs to continue such methodological experiments and development through larger studies, preferably comparing functionalities among different kinds of users and different kinds of social media platforms.

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Algorithms Between Material Being and Cultural Form: Circulation as a Challenge to Simulations in Maps, Territories, and Social Classifications

Jairo Ferreira[1]

Simulations, Maps, and Territories

The concept of simulation is not confined to computational applications, even though it is extensively employed in literature on artificial intelligence. For instance, the application of the simulation concept to examine underlying predictions of algorithmic logic is highlighted in O'Connell and Wiele's work (2021). These authors adopt Baudrillard's conceptual framework for this purpose. Our approach, however, aligns with Bateson's formulation (1973) as he developed other interconnected concepts. These concepts enable a more precise analysis of the object under study, particularly about mediatisation and social semiosis.

Simulation is a recurring theme in Bateson's works, encompassing "computational simulations" (1988) as a focal point. This places human-machine interactions and interactions among individuals of the same species at the core, facilitating our exploration of AI, algorithms, and platforms.

> But in the computer, cause and effect are used to simulate the 'if then …' of logic; and all sequences of cause and effect necessarily involve time. (Conversely, we may say that in scientific explanations the 'if … then …' of logic is used to simulate the 'if … then …' of cause and effect.) The computer never truly encounters logical paradox, but only the simulation of paradox in trains of cause and effect… In fact, there are important differences between the world of logic and the world of phenomena, and these differences must be allowed for whenever we base our arguments upon the partial but important analogy which exists between them. (Bateson 1973: 3).

This statement indicates a focus on simulating mental operations while underscoring the distinction between computational logic and the actual phenome-

[1] Visiting Professor at the Post–Graduate program in Communication – POSCOM, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil.

non it seeks to replicate. In the context of propositional logic ("if…then…"), the emphasis is more on algorithms than on artificial intelligence. This distinction will be revisited in the next section.

Within this framework, it is crucial to position simulation as a speculative forecast, albeit one subject to scrutiny, within the perspective of mediatisation. In this process, it encounters a range of interpretations in the realm of reception, including those shaped within constructed collectives.

Thus, we examine the relevance of distinguishing between maps and territories. Simulation, in this context, can be interpreted as a form of mapping. From ancient cave paintings to contemporary artificial intelligence software, the extensive evolution of media mechanisms can be viewed as various types of maps – image maps, sound maps, analogical maps, maps of logical operations, socio-discursive maps, maps of neural networks (AI), and more. Each of these maps corresponds to a territory, and the same territory can serve as the subject of multiple maps. The significance of adopting a perspective based on maps lies in acknowledging the complexity of semiosis (which cannot be reduced to a single discursive structure, imaginary constructs, or indexes of reality, but at the same time including all these 'ingredients' in the form of a map). While it is true that all individuals possess mental maps, only a subset of our species develops maps into material mechanisms that have the potential to activate recognition scales that are socially amplified.

The differentiation between maps and territories stands out as a fundamental concern observed by Bateson:

> In the dim region where art, magic, and religion meet and overlap, human beings have evolved the 'metaphor that is meant,' the flag which men will die to save, and the sacrament that is felt to be more than 'an outward and visible sign, given unto us.' Here we can recognise an attempt to deny the difference between map and territory, and to get back to the absolute innocence of communication by means of pure mood-signs. ([1955] 1972: 183).

Keane (2018) delves into this question from an ideological perspective. The lack of awareness regarding the distinction between map and territory is central to what the author terms semiotic ideology (the non-differentiation between a sign and its object, or, in Peirce's terms, a failure to distinguish between a signifying medium and an object). This paradox is significant: on the one hand, the object itself is inaccessible (always approached through a sign), on the other hand, if consciousness fails to differentiate between medium, sign, and a referred object, there is a tendency to sanctify the confluence of medium and object as indifferent. This sacralisation, as it becomes actualised in the process of

mediatisation on platforms, configures the phenomenon characterised by Baudrillard as a *simulacrum*.

This question evolves concerning each map (and across different historical moments). Presently, the focus is on the relationships between maps of artificial intelligence, algorithms, and their respective territories. Critical social theory plays a crucial role here: it seeks to desacralise the medium-object relationship, and consequently, the map-territory relationship when considering AI and algorithms, much like it has done concerning discourse, images, soundscapes, and so forth.

This does not preclude a messianic challenge. In the context of the concept of circulation, the differentiation between map and territory becomes active in processes where reception does not identify itself as part of predetermined territories, as will be exemplified in the next section. However, this lack of recognition does not always stem from a differentiation between map and territory or medium and object. Frequently, collectives under construction reproduce the logic of non-differentiation between medium-object or map and territory.

When related to this process, social critique, therefore, involves seeking intelligibility according to the legacies of the social sciences, from an analytical or pedagogical perspective. Here it is important to differentiate between what we term natural algorithms and artificial algorithms.

Natural Algorithms and Material Algorithms

An algorithm represents a distinct form of simulation compared to previous ones (such as texts, images, sound recordings, narratives, argumentation, informative documents, models, etc., considering the diverse means of public space), and therefore emerges as a new medium of communication. But what is an algorithm? We propose that, above all, it is a sign – a system that articulates rules and inferential operations – simulating mental processes that generate other media forms (from signals to discourse, encompassing interaction). Viewing the algorithm as rules and operations places it at a meta-operatory level, logical, encompassing not only mathematics but also language – a collection of logical signs. From this perspective, algorithms are logical maps of territories and, simultaneously, devices for producing signs.

These territories encompass an extensive array of social practices, both past and present, that serve as objects for simulation. At the same time, algorithms act as territories for other simulator maps, such as artificial intelligence. We can therefore problematise the genealogy of this process, which we categorise as material algorithms with their origin in 'the algorithms of living organisms'.

Drawing from Bateson's observations (1955) in his random observation of animal behaviour, algorithms are cognitive maps observable in various species like lions, bees, ants, etc. Observing these animals' behaviour reveals not just individual rules and operations but also coordinated collective actions, indicating that algorithms, as simulations, are not solely individual but also social. They configure themselves as maps simulating existing or predictive collective territories, in the event of its making (its object), thereby constructing territories.

The fundamental rule of algorithms is "if… then," with "then" leading to derivative operations and new "ifs" and "thens" in abyssal matrices, involving complex proportional combinatorics, often with solutions beyond the reach of AI–activated paradigms. If AI is dedicated to searching for new "intelligence" to solve these matrices, material algorithms serve as the operational framework for these AI logics.

A key question arises: if algorithms are characteristic of all living organisms, how do we differentiate these maps from territories among animal species in general and particularly among those designated as humans?

If we consider action as a form of materialisation, and if the same occurs among lions, bees, and ants, it may be interesting to identify the difference between predatory actions, constructive actions (such as ant nests and beehives), playful actions, actions of struggle, or the exercise of sexuality, etc. among humans and other species. But there are also continuities there. For example, there is continuity in metalanguage, which according to Bateson's (1955) conception can also be observed in other animal species. The same can be said about the lack of distinction between maps and territory, as animals in general consider the map as the territory itself. That is, the simulacrum is the reality.

The most plausible explanation is that the differentiation of human maps lies in the differentiation between maps and territories, medium and object. When individual and collective actors observe the materialisation of map logic in their languages and rituals (images, writing, sounds, diagrams, etc.) they configure new levels of simulations according to meta–reflections on simulative actions. As previously mentioned, AI has an even more abstract plan: it is about researching how to configure its logic.

Being aware of these maps is not specific to the cybernetic project, although it has condensed a trajectory. The term *algorithm* comes from the Persian mathematician Abū Jafar Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al–Khwārizmī, from Baghdad, and a frequenter of the House of Wisdom (Striphas 2015). Thus, the algorithm by definition refers to rules that regulate procedures to perform a mathematical operation. This foundation has been less popularised than Ada Lovelace (Essinger 2005), who developed the founding discourse. As a friend of Charles

Babbage, she would have inferred that the machine developed by him could be 'applied' even to musical notation. Lovelace has been the subject of controversies that even involved her militant gender position, being dismissed by some computer scientists as crazy, and being discriminated against by others, resulting in a lack of credit for her inventions in the field of computing. Many prefer to credit the concept to Alan Turing for his suggestion made a century later. Therefore, there is a historical lineage behind the algorithm and the cybernetic project that refers to a new stage in this long process of animal life, considering the specificity of humans.

AI and algorithms represent a more abstract plan that involves configuring their logic. The awareness of these maps extends beyond the cyber project and involves a long evolutionary process of animal life, emphasising human specificity.

Material mental maps and logic simulators in AI and algorithms, acting as constructors of maps activated in the practices of various animal species, are becoming increasingly complex. They simulate not only human practices but also those of other species, transforming them into simulating maps for problem resolution – a phenomenon evident in the literature. The genealogy of AI and algorithms warrants consideration from social and communication sciences perspectives.

We present a succession of examples that help to understand this problem. Both examples are simple linear operations (of the kind "if… then")

Example 1.
If the tattoo is of a fish and the fish scales are pink. […] Then the origin of the tattoo is China. […] If the tattoo is of a snake and the snake's scales are blue […] Then the origin of the tattoo is Hong Kong […] If the tattoo is of a dragon and the dragon's scales are red [….] Then the origin of the tattoo is Beijing (Harmon and King 1988: 49).

Example 2.
If there is a boné nearby and the dog is hungry, he will eat it; If the dog is hungry, but there is no bone nearby, he will look for one; If the dog is not hungry, but sleepy, he will sleep; If the dog is not hungry nor sleepy, the dog will walk and bark (Kishimoto 2004: 6).

We can compare with the complexity of operations derived from the systems below:

Example 3.
The Intelligence of Swarms also referred to as the Intelligence of Colonies or Collective Intelligence, is a set of techniques based on the collective behaviour of auto-organised systems, distributed, autonomous, flexible, and dynamic. These systems are formed by a population of simple computational agents that can perceive and modify their environment locally. This capacity makes it possible to communicate among agents, which captures the changes in the environment generated by the behaviour of their congeners. Although there is no centralised structure of control that establishes how the agents must behave, and even not having an explicit model of the environment, the local interactions among agents usually lead to the emergence of a global behaviour that approximates problem-solving. The main properties of a system of intelligence of swarm are (Millonas, 1994): *proximity – the agents must be capable of interacting; *Quality – the agents must be capable of evaluating their behaviours; *Diversity – allows the system to react to unexpected situations; Stability – not every environmental variation must affect the behaviour of an agent; *Adaptability – the capacity of adequating to environmental variations. Two of the major research lines that emerge from these properties can be observed in the intelligence of swarms: works inspired in the study of behaviour of social insects, like ants, bees, termites, and vesps (Serapião 2009: 271–272).

The same author cites experiments with real ants that observe the behaviour in the animal collection from the laboratory:

Example 4.
An ant nest was placed in an aquarium with a food source at the other end. To get to this food, two paths were created, one being larger than the other. Initially, each ant follows a random exploratory path. As the ants that chose the shortest path travelled more quickly than the others, they deposited a greater amount of pheromone on that path compared to the other in the same time interval. Therefore, at a certain moment, the intensity of the pheromone on the shortest path was so high that almost all the ants followed it (Serapião 2009: 273).

Another interesting reference is the study of the behaviour of bacteria modelled by the construction of algorithms. It is the Bacterial foraging Optimisation (BFO):

Example 5.
This algorithm was based on strategies for locating, manipulating, and ingesting food from cells of the bacterium Escherichia Coli, as this bacterium is one of the best-known organisms today. Bacteria tend to migrate to nutrient-rich areas using a mechanism called chemotaxis. It is known that the bacteria swim in the liquid medium by the rotation of the flagella, guided by a reversible propeller embedded in the cell wall. E. Coli has 8–10 flagella randomly placed on the cell body. When all flagella move counterclockwise, they become compact, propelling the cell along a helical trajectory. When the flagella move clockwise, they all pull the bacteria in different directions, which results in a random change in the direction of movement, with very little displacement. Such movement (θi) is justified as a way of increasing the chances of the bacteria following a path that makes it reach more favourable regions to obtain nutrients. The sequence of movements and the duration of a unidirectional displacement will depend on the concentration of nutrients or harmful substances (or being neutral), or even on the presence of a nutritive or harmful gradient (dependent on the spatial variation in the density of nutrients or harmful substances). in the region where the bacteria are located (Serapião 2009: 280).

In this context, animal intelligence is being simulated, prompting the consideration that human intelligence simulates the animal intelligence of other species, forming maps of other maps. Here, the construction of territories by other species, whose logic is of interest to the construction of territories by the human species, is highlighted.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, the examples mentioned above illustrate the progression from the early stages of AI programs with simple algorithms (examples 1 and 2, expert systems phase) to more complex ones (examples 3, 4, and 5). In the latter, coordinated actions among several subjects are considered in conjunction with the environment and its transformations. According to the author Serapião (2009), these advanced algorithms are employed in solving scientific problems, engineering, robot projects, economic flows, energy, etc. The richness lies in presenting each "family" of algorithms based on assumptions that can be characterised from an animal anthropology perspective. The study of animal behaviours is translated into a system capable of algorithmic language regulation, governing human behaviours in interactions with other humans or objects. Conversely, this reinforces the argument that algorithms and intelligence are not exclusive to the human species but are characteristics of all species.

The central issue, therefore, extends beyond contemplating the relationship between natural intelligence and artificial intelligence; it encompasses both natural algorithms and algorithms materialised in media dispositifs.

Classification Logics and Circulation

Lévi-Strauss (1955) suggests that "every classification is superior to chaos; and, even a classification at the level of sensible properties, it is a stage for a new rational order," highlighting the transversal classificatory logics present in all societies, from those deemed "modern" to "wild" ones. These classifications encompass not only utilities but also aesthetics. Building upon this perspective, we can view classification as an inherent tendency of the species, much like the algorithm.

Three questions guide the reflection on this matter: does this classificatory propensity belong to logic itself, or is it an "external data" incorporated into the algorithms (in other words, is it valid to separate the logic of algorithms and the logic of classifications)? How can we understand the possible articulation between algorithmic logic and classifications? Is classification inherently hierarchical?

The first question finds an evolving answer in current research. According to the authors, there is a logical convergence between the logic of an algorithm and the logic of classification, a convergence that informs the construction of "algorithmic machines," as stated by Almeida (1999).

A set of objects is a particularly simple structure. Given an initial set of objects, we can specify a subset and thus the notion of objects with certain properties. In a structure of properties, we answer questions about objects; for each object of the base set, we say if it belongs or not to the subset in question (that is: whether it has or doesn't have a property). Refining this principle, we get to classifications. Every property induces a binary classification: it divides the base set into two subsets, one of the objects that attend the property and one of those that do not satisfy it. François Lorrain elaborated in details the Lévi-Straussian notion of a "logic of binary oppositions." (Almeida 1998).

Some authors (Chaimovich 2015) interpret this logical convergence as a continuation of the Aristotelian project, specifically rooted in the principle of non-contradiction. This principle forms the basis for a logic of discrimination and classification of objects. From a critical perspective, the identity principle involves a dual logic of comparison between one being concerning another, aligning with Aristotelian propositions concerning the identity and its correlates, such as non-contradiction and the excluded third.

Questions for consideration:

a) Is Lévi-Strauss entirely Aristotelian? In Aristoteles, there are other forms of inference not strictly guided by the principle of identity, such as analogy and dialectical argumentation. While it is plausible to acknowledge that the search for universality in Aristoteles is linked to the exploration of "major premises" valid for understanding particular phenomena, contradiction and analogy seem to belong more to the phenomenon itself and inductive inferences about it.

b) Does the concept of universality in Lévi-Strauss carry the same Eurocentric connotations it had until then, or is it more about transversal logic applicable to the diversity of cultures, embodying the logic of classification itself?

In this context, Chaimovich (2015) raises a crucial question for our understanding: while contemporary research reveals a multitude of logics that prompt inquiries into perspectives on universal knowledge, it remains unclear whether they allow for a non-classificatory comprehension of phenomena.

In the realm of media – simulations, maps, and territories – considering the relationship between logic and knowledge in the current proliferation of AI logics, algorithms, and platforms, it seems plausible to envision a propensity for diverse knowledge construction. Within this debate, a pertinent question arises: why do platforms, that could benefit from diverse logical approaches, tend to reproduce simulations governed by specific classification logics? Instances of classification and hierarchisation are observable across various platforms – not only institutional ones, as discussed by O'Connell, C. & Van De Wiele, C. (2021), but also those directed at the public sphere.

Let's explore a few examples. The critique of Google's racist classification systems is well-documented. For instance, search engines consistently associated the term "bad and ugly hair" with black people (Martins 2023: 35):

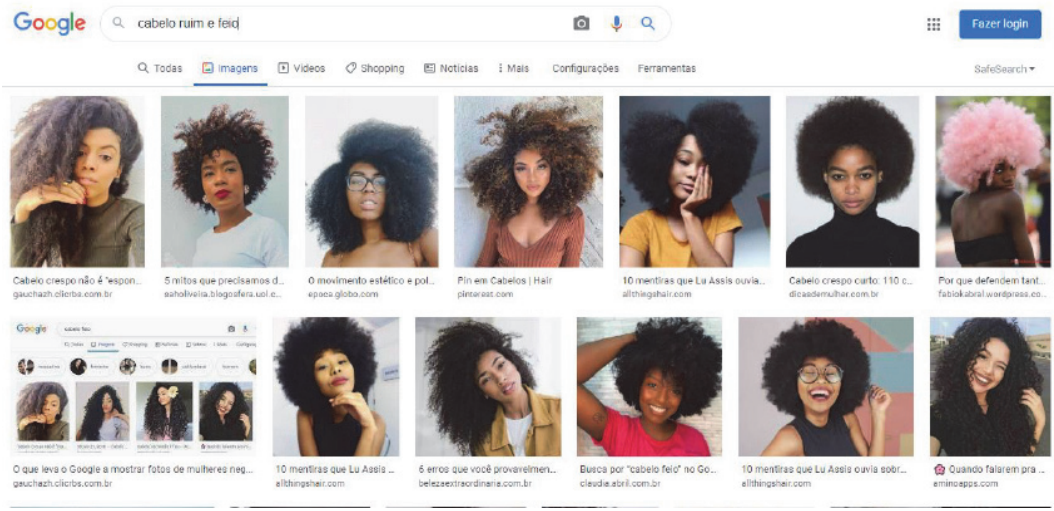

Figure 1 – "bad and ugly hair", Retrieved from Google, 2021.

Two years after the initial publication, the search for "bad and ugly hair" no longer predominantly associates with black women on Google. What led to this change? Why do Google search engines now generate classification systems primarily focused on non-black men and women?

Our interpretation posits that classification systems present competing arguments, inherently contradictory between themselves that necessitates cultural inferences (which simulation and maps should be considered as a reference?). These inferences are not provided within a specific platform but may materialise in other mediums, especially within what is commonly referred to as socio-digital networks.

However, the removal of stigmatising images related to Black aesthetics doesn't prevent the emergence of reverse classification systems. These serve as maps depicting aesthetic territories on platforms like Google. For instance, a search for the term "beautiful women" predominantly yields images of non-black women; a similar pattern emerges when searching for terms such as "handsome men," "beautiful families," "successful professionals," and so on. Do these aesthetic maps, by diminishing the representation of black people in search systems in Brazil, signify an endorsement of classification systems aligned with non-black hegemonies in state and private institutions in Brazil? Or is it an attempt to globalise classification systems considered "universal"?

In this context, there appears to be a process that could be interpreted as a tentative ethnocide – specifically, the demise of concurrent classification systems. Simultaneously, the circulation of information tends to scrutinise and dis-

mantle these systems deemed "universal" in a tactical game, where institutions manoeuvre in "position wars" within their platforms. To comprehend this dynamic, it is essential to also observe alternative channels available on different platforms, such as newspapers, television, and social media.

On social media, movements, and black media actors have been actively engaged in offering a social response through criticism and deconstruction of Google's classifications on this theme and agenda. Martins (2023), in his Master's research, compiled a collection of critiques and deconstructions, though not exhaustive, regarding the classifications associated with search terms like "ugly hair" as highlighted by Google (in Brazil, afro hair is derogatorily referred to as "bad or ugly hair"):

- "curly hair is not a 'sponge': three black women explain why the term is pejorative[2]."
- 5 myths on curly hair we need to overturn[3]
- the aesthetic and political movement of frizzy and curly hair[4]
- it was all a lie: 10 things Lu Assis used to hear about her curly hair in her childhood[5]
- short curly hair: check out incredible haircuts and learn how to take care of your hair[6]
- why do they advocate the "right" of badmouthing frizzy and curly hair?[7]
- what leads Google to show black women as a result of the "ugly hair" search[8]?"

[2] https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/donna/noticia/2020/06/cabelo-crespo-nao-e-esponja-tres-mulheres-negras-explicam-por-que-o-termo-e-pejorativo-ckbmn0ru7000i01626h3t7ufh.html

[3] https://saholiveira.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2020/03/07/5-mitos-sobre-o-cabelo-crespo/?cmpid=copiaecola

[4] https://epoca.globo.com/sociedade/noticia/2018/04/o-movimento-estetico-e-politico-dos-cabelos-crespos-e-cacheados.html

[5] https://www.allthingshair.com/pt-br/penteados-cortes/cabelos-crespos/lu-assis-cabelo-crespo-infantil/

[6] https://www.dicasdemulher.com.br/cabelo-crespo-curto/

[7] https://fabiokabral.wordpress.com/2015/02/06/por-que-defendem-tanto-o-direito-de-falar-mal-dos-cabelos-crespos-e-cacheados/

[8] https://gauchazh.clicrbs.com.br/tecnologia/noticia/2020/07/o-que-leva-o-google-a-mostrar-fotos-de-mulheres-negras-para-a-busca-de-cabelo-feio-ckcq9jbmx002k013g2f9hw2xa.html#:~:text=Ao%20digitar%20as%20palavras%20%22mulher,quando%20pesquisavam%20por%20essas%20palavras

Therefore, the algorithmic project, functioning as a regulator for content, programs, interactions, and indexes, is not absolute in the cases under investigation within media processes. From the perspective of circulation, where socio-digital interactive networks and other content and program platforms coexist, we can identify alternative maps in public space that appear in media agendas. In contemporary times, algorithms are starting to tentatively constitute a medium of mediums. In other words, their attempt to acquire referential agency for content, programs, indexes, and interactions succumbs to competing classifications and the subsequent deconstruction of classifications suggested by global platforms.

Hence, each medium and algorithmic logic needs to be examined to understand how circulation transforms the provided maps. For example, what critiques, resistances, and deconstructions are activated when a user encounters EdgeRank classifications on Facebook, based on rules and operations of particular relevance? What kind of interactional targeting occurs in these classification systems? How about the classification system on Instagram? Questions can also be raised about the classification systems used by various streaming channels for TV series, documentaries, movies, music, etc. (such as Spotify and Netflix).

The difference lies not only in the maps offered but also in the logic of algorithms, including learning from users' uses and interactions. The emergence in Brazil of circuits for deconstructing and critiquing racist classifications is evident. It will be rarer to find circuits critiquing and resisting the targeting of interactions and memories on Facebook and Instagram, and different still will be the resistance of culture to the targeting of musical consumption on Spotify and movies on Netflix.

Certainly, no single rule can be established here. Do the institutional platforms analysed by O'Connell, & Van de Wielee (2021) tend to be more fixed in their logic and classifications than Google? What are the limits of the learning mechanisms of Facebook and Instagram? These platforms have recently been scrutinised by fake news regulation projects in Brazil, stemming from demands by social and political movements. How does this process, also related to media, lead to a new logic for these two platforms? Similar questions can be asked about algorithms and platforms for classifying music, films, series, documentaries, etc. Empirical research, at the micro level, considering the specific algorithmic logics of the platforms, can, case by case, elucidate this growing differentiation in classification systems within the context of media processes, where each planetary platform is inserted. From this perspective, circulation is a productive object to contemplate this process beyond the specific analysis of media as systems of social production of meaning.

Syllogism And Abduction: Which Map To Follow?

The fundamental syllogism of the material algorithm can be perceived as a mechanism for both deductive and inductive inferences, which can be associated with classification maps aimed at social territories. These inferences generate new signs and social discourses, where the former are regarded as fragments (in the form of images, texts, and sound), and the latter are viewed as structured sign colligation.

INFERENCE FLOW OF MATERIAL ALGORITHMS			
Deduction	Classification Maps	Territories	Signs and discourses
Induction (learning)	Signs, discourses on the web	Territories	Updated Classification Maps

Scheme 5. Source: author (with reference in Peirce's formulations, 1958; 1970).

As previously emphasised, the investigation of classification maps needs to be conducted on a case-by-case basis, as proposed earlier. These maps exhibit dynamic characteristics, especially considering the transformative nature of classification across global platforms (Google, Spotify, Netflix, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), as well as public platforms within specific Nation-States or global entities like the WHO. These transformations result not only from the embedded learning logics in algorithms but also from the context of circulation, where additional logics are integrated into classificatory maps. This includes mutations of algorithmic logic or new AI paradigms introduced by owners, exemplified in the context of the "ugly hair" theme and agenda.

The degree of institutionalisation emerges as a crucial factor in understanding the disparities between classificatory maps and their transformations. For instance, distinctions can be drawn between the classification maps of major corporations like Google (marked by institutionalised classifications) and those of social movements (characterised by numerous agonistic differences between classification maps, such as platforms for ecological movements, resistance to racism, indigenous rights, etc., where contradictions lean more towards dialectics than identity).

The inferential process gains complexity when considering circulation, as in this dynamic process, material algorithms acquire new meanings through interactions with natural algorithms, suggesting alternative maps and territories.

INFERENCE FLOW OF CULTURAL ALGORITHMS			
Abductions in the cultural sphere	Signs and discourses on platforms	Mental maps of culture – other classifications	Attempt of territories' reconstruction
Induction (machine learning)	Signs, discourses	Territories	Redefined classification maps
Deduction	Classification maps updated by their authors	Reconstructed Territories	Signs and discourses

Scheme 6. Source: author (reference in Peirce's formulations, 1958; 1970).

In this context, abduction emerges as a distinctive form of inference derived from non-materialised cultural algorithms. It comes into play through the agency of social actors operating across various media, such as platform-based map makers, traditional media outlets (newspapers, television, radio), and individuals engaged in diverse interactional circuits. These actors activate signs and discourses that contribute to the reconstruction of territories, drawing upon maps, signs, and territories not encompassed by existing frameworks or replicating conflicting classifications. Abduction, therefore, engages with contradictions, analogies, and homologies, facilitating the differentiation of classificatory maps and the reconfiguration of territories, signs, and social discourses.

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How to Manage Complexity? Observing the Observers: Luhmann and Verón

Viviane Borelli[1] *and Heike Graf*[2]

Introduction

We all share the personal experience that we live in a complex world, much of which is due to mediatisation. The Internet creates an unexpected level of complexity. As a researcher, you have access to many more sources than before, and this allows you to gain insights from different perspectives. However, the Internet also manages complexity by selecting information from a vast array of different sources that would have been difficult to access with previous media. The Internet can be seen as both a "complexity-producing machine" and a "complexity-managing machine" (Nassehi 2019: 284. Authors' translation). Beyond what communication technologies can do, we often experience a lack of ability to comprehend complexity in our research. Complexity is often seen as an obstacle, or even as a last resort when questions cannot be answered. How can we, as researchers, approach the world by taking its complexity into account?

In this article, we focus on how two scholars, the German sociologist and prominent thinker in social systems theory Niklas Luhmann and the Argentinean sociologist and semiotician Eliseo Verón, approach complexity. In doing so, we look at the similarities and differences in how they manage complexity from two different perspectives. We chose them because we found many similarities that we wanted to sort out. Among Spanish and Portuguese-speaking media scholars, Verón is frequently cited, while Luhmann has mainly influenced German-speaking countries and mostly scholars based in Europe, America, and Asia who are fluent in German or can use translations. Translations of Luhmann's books present a challenge due to their difficulty in comprehension, even for native German speakers, as he deliberately employs abstract language to construct a general theory. However, there was an early reception in Italy, Spain, and Latin American countries such as Chile, Mexico, and Brazil (Stich-

[1] Professor at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil, where she coordinates the Research Group: "Media Circulation and Communication Strategies" (CIMID).
[2] Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden.

weh 1999; Medina 2014). In Europe, Verón is mainly known in France, Spain, and Italy (Averbeck-Lietz 2021; Cheveigné 2018).

Luhmann (1927–1998) devoted his entire work to a grand theory of society. This theory posits communication as the foundational aspect of society, recognising its complex nature. Luhmann was very productive in his lifetime, having published 70 books and nearly 400 scholarly articles on a variety of subjects, including mass media, ecology, economy, politics, art, religion, and love.[3] Verón (1935–2014) is a pioneer in the field of social semiotics and has done wide empirical research, for example, on how the media construct meanings and produce discourses by analysing news coverage, television programs, and electoral campaigns, among others. As Cheveignén (2018: 19) points out, Verón valued applied research because he believed that it "offers access to a concrete experience of the functioning of the institutions of our society than a purely 'academic' researcher". Verón has conducted many studies in which it has been possible to test his theories against "empirical evidence as close as possible to social life" (Authors' translation). After Luhmann's death, Verón began to read Luhmann's work and showed a growing interest in social systems theory. In "La semiosis social 2" written in 2013, shortly before his death, Verón revisits some of his previous studies in light of theories developed by Charles Sanders Peirce, Antoine Culioli, and Luhmann. He argues that an epistemology of observation is necessary to deal with complexity, as will be explained below, which inspires us to look more closely and carefully at the complexities that make up the processes of meaning production in mediatised societies.

Meaning, Communication, Semiosis

Luhmann approaches the complex phenomena of meaning production from the perspective of communication, whereas Verón focuses on media and signs, and prefers the term "semiosis" to describe communication and the production of meaning. The term semiosis is taken from Peirce to designate "the interdiscursive network of the social production of meaning" (Verón 1979: 140. Authors' translation), as infinite, ternary (the sign is composed of three elements: *representamen*, *object*, and *interpretant*), social, and historical (Verón 1980). Like Verón, Umberto Eco employs the Peircian concept of sign in his studies, recognising that there is no initial nor final sign due to a process of infinite semiosis. Verón shows his focus on semiotics by claiming that the produc-

[3] Some works by Luhmann (2010, 2015, 2016) have been translated into Portuguese such as "The Reality of the Mass Media", "Introduction to Systems Theory", and "Social Systems".

tion of meaning – as a process – always involves signs. According to him, all communication is mediated since it starts with the body and its multiple processes of semiosis.

Luhmann emphasises the vital role of media in facilitating communication and constructing meaning. However, he also introduces the idea that communication is improbable or not always certain, even though it is an integral aspect of our daily lives. He treats communication not as a phenomenon but as a problem that has been exacerbated by communication technologies and asserts the importance of acknowledging obstacles to communication. One obstacle is the limited access one has to others' thoughts due to the separateness of human consciousness. Direct access to thoughts is unavailable, leaving individuals with only communicated expressions as points of reference. Another obstacle lies in reaching an audience, and another obstacle in ultimately ensuring the success of the communication. From this starting point of uncertainty, he asks how communication is possible at all (Luhmann 1981). Here, media comes in by focusing on how media function to establish and maintain communication. Hence, he distinguishes between three different forms of communication media: a) language (including the body) as the basic communication medium to represent perceptions; b) distribution media (writing, printing, digital media) to extend communication to an absent public; and c) symbolically generalised media (money, power, truth, love, beliefs) as means to reduce improbability by encouraging successful communication. They assist in symbolically mediating the context: in the realm of love, for instance, communication differs from that of commercial transactions which are defined by financial capability (money). For this article, the third dimension is not a part of further discussions.

Luhmann generally claims that society is based on communication, nothing more and nothing less – everything exists because of communication. In terms of communication, both scholars radically broke with the traditional way of thinking about communication as a linear process of the transmission of a message, that is, a message's progression from one stage to another. Luhmann states that "in communication, nothing is given away". A person who is communicating something "does not lose the corresponding knowledge in his head". Instead, we are addressing a process "that has apparently multiplying effects" (Luhmann 2013: 213). Verón discusses a similar question by asking:

> Are the phenomena of the media a prerequisite for the psychic system of sapiens? The answer is no. Conversely, are psychic systems a prerequisite for media? The answer is yes. Are psychic systems a prerequisite of social systems? The answer is yes, but not in a linear direct way, but through the emergence of the phenomena of the media. So, are media phenomena a precondition of complex social systems? The answer is yes. (Verón 2013: 301–302. Autors' translation)

As a result, social processes have become increasingly complex. These "multiplying effects" of mediated communication are something that we observe especially today. Verón (2004) argues that the accelerated mediatisation of industrial societies has resulted in increasingly complex operations of meaning-making rather than simple cause-and-effect relationships. Thus, media have an effect of increasing complexity, but they also have an effect of decreasing it. This is one of Luhmann's propositions – specifically about the role of systems in reducing complexity – that catches Verón's attention as will be explained later.

Luhmann's and Verón's approaches to communication are almost similar. In Luhmann's words, communication is the unity of three selections: *information* (what), *utterance* (how), and *understanding*. Without understanding there is no communication. Otherwise, it is just the transmission of information, talking into the void. In Verón's words, communication consists of the *enunciated* for the "what", *enunciation* for the "how", and *recognition* for "understanding". For him, too, communication is achieved through recognition, for example by a reader. He proposes the concept of a "reading contract" that "creates the link between the medium and its reader" (Verón 2004: 219. Authors' translation; Verón 1985). He has observed and analysed in detail the differences in the enunciation of competing magazines, which have peculiarities in the way they say things that may or may not strengthen their bonds with their readers. The media are concerned with keeping their audiences connected over time through different contracts since the goal of the contract is to "build and maintain the habitus of consumption" (Verón 2004: 280. Authors' translation).

As a result, both scholars highlight the importance of the recipient in communication. Verón emphasises the recipient's response or feedback through recognition, while Luhmann focuses on the recipient's understanding. In both cases, communication is achieved. This means that the message no longer plays the decisive role as in other theories. As Verón states: "The real object (to be examined) is not the message itself (in whatever way we conceptualise it, as a set of signs or as a discourse) but the production/recognition of meaning, a meaning whose message is only the point of passage" (Verón 2004: 237. Authors' translation). The message can be read very differently because "a given device of enunciation never produces a single effect, but always several depending on the receivers in question" (Verón 1992: 11). As the author problematises, there is no effect of meaning that occurs linearly, as if it were a relationship of cause and effect. There is, rather, a kind of "mismatch" between media supply and reception (Verón 1996; 2004; 2013). This is in line with Luhmann's notion of *understanding* which does not mean that a message is correctly understood as intended by the sender or author. Even if something is not understood as intended, communication can continue. Luhmann decouples it from the herme-

neutic concept of understanding. The purpose is not to uncover the sender's intentions. *Understanding* is simply a response, which can include stating: "I didn't understand you".

These concepts of both authors highlight the unity, and thus, the relationship between these three mentioned components of information/enunciated, message/enunciation, and understanding/recognition (rather than the objects as such). This is an operational approach, meaning that these components are only effective at the moment that communication is taking place. Communication or semiosis is a recursive (circular) process in which communication is connected to communication. According to Luhmann, the function of communication is to continue to communicate, or in other words, to enable a high probability of communicative connectivity. The function is not, as we might approach it in everyday life, the correct understanding of what the other person has in mind. Luhmann criticises Habermas (1984) who sees communication as reaching consensus or agreement and claims that Habermas' approach is empirically wrong. Communication, he claims, can also be used to seek dissent (Luhmann 1992).

According to Fausto Neto (2016), this approach by both authors concerns the complex relationship between media supply and consumption and asserts that the convergence of Veronian and Luhmannian concepts lies in the idea of communication that is far from equilibrium. Specifically, Verón observes discontinuities between production and reception, while Luhmann explores the relationship between systems and their environment, as outlined below.

Mediatisation and Circulation

In the 1980s[4] Verón (1986) developed for the first time the concept of mediatisation about politics. The concept was further developed in the 1990s, when he proposed a scheme, an "inaugural diagram", as Fausto Neto (2018) calls it, to analyse mediatisation from the perspective of the constitutive complexity of the relationships between institutions, media, and individual actors. There, Verón (1997) draws attention to the unpredictability (or uncertainty) of communication and the mutual relationships between these components and their bifurcations, which affect each other and transform social practices. He conducted several empirical studies such as covers of women's magazines, television cam-

[4] Authors such as Lundby (2009) and Martino (2008) have reflected on the probable beginnings of the concept's use in their respective regions, the Nordic context and Latin America. In 1986, Verón and Swede Kent Asp both mentioned it for the first time. They problematise the mediatisation of politics in the contexts they study. It is unlikely that they were aware of each other's work.

paigns, and televised electoral debates. He analysed what he calls the "fabrication" of images and news, that is, showing the process of producing a social reality from the raw material, "through the assembly lines, the adjustments, the quality controls, to the final product: the news" (Verón 1981: II. Authors' translation). By focusing on the semiosis produced by social actors in the political and media field, he clarifies the mediatisation of politics.

In this way, Verón gives rise to the notion of circulation. In a 2013 document prepared for internal use within Centro Internacional de Semiótica e Comunicação (Ciseco),[5] Verón argues for addressing the issue of circulation within communication research. For him, in the face of the explosion of the Internet phenomenon, it was necessary to advance the study of recognition and to develop a theory of discursive circulation. According to Fausto Neto (2008), Verón proposed an analysis of mediatisation that conceptualises the dynamics through complex non-linear feedback loops, instead of cause-and-effect processes. In Verón's words: "Non-linear means that there are bifurcations in the circulation and that, as a result, the circulation of communication is a process that is far from equilibrium" (2008: 149. Authors' translation). In this way, Fausto Neto notes that the process of mediatisation entails changes "to social organisation and its functioning. This generates complex mutations in the conditions of meaning circulation" (2018: 15. Authors' translation). Therefore, Verón argues that there are discontinuities and differences in the process of meaning-making. He questions the possibility of seeing a beginning and an end in communication. He sees a difference between production and recognition which is especially visible in mediatised society. Because of this difference between message production and consumption, he speaks of "de-contextualisation of meaning" and asks: "Can we study reception from whom to whom? Can we continue to speak of receivers, publics, audiences, as has been done for years?" (Verón 2019: 164. Authors' translation). For instance, the publication of news by the media can be a trigger to produce reader comments. And the media

[5] The "Centro Internacional de Semiótica e Comunicação" was inaugurated in 2009, with the theme of its inaugural "Pentalogue": "Transformações da midiatização presidencial: corpos, relatos, negociações, resistências", the subject of which was taken up again at its last event, in 2022, held remotely. Ciseco was created by researchers from various countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, France, Italy, among others, and has its headquarters outside the institutional environment of universities, but on a small beach in Japaratinga, Alagoas, in northeastern Brazil, with Eliseo Verón as its honorary president and Antonio Fausto Neto, its president since 2015. According to the inaugural document, Ciseco was born with the intention of bringing together researchers interested in different issues related to "semiotics applied to communication phenomena, mainly of a media nature". For over a decade, Ciseco has endeavored to be an "autonomous space for reflection and research into the phenomena of meaning production". More information at http://www.ciseco.org.br and https://www.youtube.com/@CISECO_CISECO.

publication can also be triggered by other utterances. It follows that these utterance flows generate different interactional processes in multiple environments.

Therefore, the act of circulation should not be viewed solely as the transfer of a message from one point to another. Rather, it is a process that generates numerous unpredictable meanings and should be approached as such. By highlighting this non-linear character of communication, he distinguishes between

> *production* conditions and grammars, on the one side, and *reconnaissance* [recognition] conditions and grammars on the other: at the societal level, discourse circulation of meaning is structurally broken. (Verón 2014a: 4)

For him, the challenge of research is precisely to keep in mind the complexity of the processes involved in the production of meaning. In doing so, we have to look for mutual relationships between the grammar of production and the grammar of recognition. These two entities are unique in their composition, but must not be analysed independently as there are indications of discursive materialities within the production process. Verón (2004; 2013) seeks to advance the study of meaning production by analysing the text itself, as proposed by the first-order semiology bound to the corpus and the sentence. The second-order semiology, however, considers "the production of meaning under the (diffuse) influence of 'generative grammars': starting from texts, it was a matter of reconstructing the process of their creation" (Verón 2004: 215. Authors' translation). For him, the third-order semiology focuses on complexifying the relations between the enunciator and the modalities of his/her utterance. To this end, he develops methodologies and analytical strategies that also try to consider the multiple grammars of recognition.

According to Verón, the "de-contextualisation of meaning" begins with the invention of the printing press. The history of mediatisation is a constant struggle over stabilising meanings which becomes more and more complex (Verón 2014a: 6). In line with Luhmann, he states that "(…) the qualitative difference between the logics operating in *production* and *reconnaissance* is a result of a systemic factor, not of a semiotic one" (Verón 2014b: 174), i.e. different logics refer to different systems/contexts of message production and consumption, and characterised by *autopoiesis*.

Verón wonders whether de-contextualisation also occurs in non-mediated, face-to-face communication, which is usually described as linear and more predictable. He refers to Luhmann by claiming that the mind, as he calls the "socio-individual system", is a precondition for communication, but is inaccessible (Verón 2014b; 2013), so one does not know what is going on in the mind. What is said may be different from what is in the mind. Also, in face-to-face

communication, we cannot speak of linear communication. He gives an example from watching TV:

> The context is undoubtedly that of the family, but the grammars of recognition operate exclusively in each of its members, and nothing allows us to conclude from the context of family consumption that a soap opera is interpreted homogeneously by the mother, the father, and the children. At no point does it say so, but we are left in the dark about the differences between the interpretative operations of the various members of the family (Verón 2013: 424. Authors' translation).

It is therefore impossible to "deduce any generalised 'effect' by studying only the semiotic characteristics of the mediatised discourse" (Verón 2014b: 174). Thus, due to the complexity of communication and media phenomena, it is no longer possible to think of circulation as a causal relation between production and recognition. The central question in research is to study mutual connections, disconnections, convergences, and divergences (especially in terms of meanings) in the circulation process and has been amply discussed and problematised in Latin American communications scholarship[6].

Signs

As a semiotician, for Verón signs are relevant as a materiality used in communication. In interpersonal communication, the materiality of communication begins with the body.

> The only thing that can be observed directly are the signs in their materiality: the observation of material configurations of signs that are fragments of semiosis, mediated (a book, a movie, a work of visual art, a poster on the street, a music CD) or unmediated (the speech of actors, their gestural sequences in a given situation, their appearance, their behavior in public spaces). (Verón 2013: 404. Authors' translation)

[6] In the "Mediatization and Circulation" dossier[#], Latin American researchers, drawing inspiration from Verón's work, discuss the concept of mediatisation and circulation, and its varied uses in their respective studies. Fausto Neto (2008) presents a historical analysis of the circulation concept in Verón's works and suggests considering it as "contact zones". Borelli and Dias (2008) raise critical questions about the notion of circulation from a theoretical and methodological perspective, highlighting challenges for research in communication and mediatisation that examines the processes of meaning circulation. And Cingolani (2008) surveys the concept of circulation in the European and Latin American contexts while Fernandez (2008) argues that the rising utilization of media platforms impacts the circulation of media discourses. See https://online.unisc.br/seer/index.php/rizoma/issue/view/551

Throughout his research trajectory, Verón (2004; 2013) analysed discursive fragments constructed by different media, such as newspapers, magazines, television events, television programs, but also face-to-face communication, art exhibitions, and the routes taken by visitors. He follows Peirce's understanding of "firstness", "secondness", and "thirdness" when discussing mediatisation. As he argues:

> The central point here is that the mediatic phenomenon of the exteriorisation of mental processes has a trifold consequence. In Peircian terms again, its firstness consists in the autonomy from senders and receivers of the materialised signs, as a result of exteriorisation; its secondness is the subsequent persistence in time of the materialised signs: alterations of space and time scales become inevitable, and narrative justified; its thirdness is the body of social norms defining the ways of access to the signs already autonomous and persistent. In other words: trifold creation of differences. (Verón 2014a: 3)

However, in Luhmann's understanding, a sign is not a representation of a thing, but in line with Saussure, it is the unity of the difference (not dichotomy) between signifier and signified. The sign is neither the signified nor the signifier, but the unity of both – "Something signifies something else" (Luhmann 2013: 51). The sign marks something specific as opposed to everything that is not marked. Signifying something is done internally and bears therefore only a reference to the internally constructed reality, "Thus, language is used on the assumption that words signify something we do not know very clearly" (Luhmann 2013: 51). The meaning of the sign is created by usage, so the sign of a pipe is not the pipe itself as we know from Magritte's painting from 1929 "This is not a pipe". According to Saussure, it is the difference between signs that enables the attribution of meaning within a frame of reference. While Peirce speaks of firstness, secondness, and thirdness, Luhmann claims that there is nothing that is not related to the observer. Even firstness is a sign of something that is accessible only through designation which is done by an observer. This notion corresponds to the approach of self-reference and operational closure as well as to second-order observation as explained in the next section.

Verón agrees with Luhmann, saying that the meaning of a sign is not intrinsic, but established in communication, where a particular sign is chosen among other options. This chosen sign has a function, which is to make only certain connections for meaning making probable and to exclude others. This can also be understood as a form of managing complexity.

If both authors claim that the sign can mean different things or even that communication can turn out very differently than expected, how can we study

communication by allowing for different outcomes? In other words, how to account for contingency and complexity?

Considering Complexity

To face the issue of complexity, Verón proposes three major themes in the conceptual field. First, the understanding of Peirce's work, which in his opinion is useful for semiotics and applied research, and which must have an up-to-date reading. Second, the notion of enunciation through Antoine Cuioli's approach to language activity[7] to think about the linguistics of enunciation. Last but not least, the theory of self-organising systems is directly related to Luhmann. Communication processes are complex, and only from the perspective of their complexity can they be understood, studied, and problematised.

So, what are systems? Luhmann does not define systems as one whole composed of parts but as a *difference* concerning the environment. In other words, a system is composed of two sides: one side is the system, and the other side is the environment. The systems idea is about the ordering of things and their explanations. Communication systems need to mark their boundaries to make communication probable. Therefore, all communication takes place in a system (which also can be seen as a context), and each system exists in an environment. The term distinguishes between *system* conditions and *environmental* conditions. For instance, the interaction system of a university seminar. Only registered students are allowed to participate, a frame of reference is given such as a topic for discussion, an assignment, literature, etc. This means that it includes some things and excludes others, setting itself apart from other environments like other university classes, family gatherings, or pub meetups. The environment is always more complex than the system, and a system cannot connect to everything in the environment. With this approach, systems aim to manage complexity through exclusions.

Another example is the corporate news media, which cannot cover everything happening in society and beyond. They only cover what corresponds to their specific mode of operation or media logic (in line with Altheide & Snow 1979). In terms of systems theory, this means that systems are operationally closed and have their dynamics. A system has boundaries to its environment.

[7] Culioli (2010) develops his theory of enunciative operations in different texts and argues that the activity of language is produced by interlocutors in interaction, in other words, language is a dialogical activity and takes shape in constant and dynamic relationships between enunciator and co–enunciator.

This allows it to reduce complexity and operate. In other words, these boundaries are necessary.

And this is where the concept of *autopoiesis* comes in, which means self-production, self-reference, and self-organisation. Luhmann borrowed this term from the Chilean biologists and philosophers Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980) in connection with the self-organisation of cellular processes in the nervous system and applied it to social communication. Communication is an autopoietic reproduction because systems can only operate according to their mode of operation (or logic). For example, we can distinguish between how journalists approach a phenomenon in a newspaper and how scientists or doctors would do it. They can reduce complexity because they do not have to respond to all the information that is out there. There are different modes of communication in different systems and these modes are defined by the system in which the communication takes place, e.g. the media company, the scientific institution, the healthcare institution, or even communication among family members. Communication systems are operationally closed and self-organising but they are not independent of their environment: Without the environment, there is no system, and vice versa.

Both Verón (1981; 1992; 2013) and Luhmann (2000) make clear that (mass) media do not simply mirror reality but produce a new reality that is strongly bound to the grammar or own mode of operation of the medium. This notion of self-reference in media production can also be applied to digitalisation. Digital information is not a reference to something that is out there but to something that is produced within a system as Nassehi claims: "Digitisation is nothing more than the representation of something in electrically/electronically measurable differences" (Nassehi 2019: 105. Authors' translation). Digital information does not represent the 'world', but rather the internal context of data production. Digital information refers to other information on the Internet, as demonstrated, for example, in the debates over AI's racial and gender bias or the bias of algorithms (e.g. Broussard 2023).

Structural Couplings: Interpenetration

If both authors assume the operational closure (autopoiesis) of the communication system, then the question arises as to how the relation to the environment is maintained. Luhmann uses the concept of "structural coupling" introduced by Maturana & Varela (1980). Verón speaks of "interpenetration" between production and recognition which enables connectivity.

To understand it, Luhmann uses a simple example from Maturana: the brain is structurally coupled to the environment through the eyes and ears. This

reduces what can be seen and heard. In this way, complexity is reduced, and because things are the way they are, the system is not overloaded with external influences. Luhmann concludes: "Structural couplings can take all possible shapes, as long as it is compatible with the system's autopoiesis. The emphasis is on compatibility" (2013: 85).

Even though Verón is particularly interested in the question of how the difference between production and recognition can be bridged, he nonetheless uses Luhmann's approach: "I like this concept that appears in Luhmann, among others, which is the idea of coupling, a coupling process between production and recognition, but a coupling between qualitatively different logics" (Verón 2008: 149. Authors' translation). That is, the assumption is that production and recognition have distinct and singular characteristics, but that they can interpenetrate through complex processes of meaning production.

According to Luhmann, coupling generally describes the situation in which one system is stimulated by another system and responds in its way to that stimulation. No coupling occurs when the system is not in "resonance", a term used by both Luhmann and Verón to describe a state of openness to stimuli. Simply put, there is no *recognition* or *understanding* if the article is not read or the movie is not seen. To increase resonance, for example, we give an example from the platform Meta where CEO Mark Zuckerberg has invested in different platforms to include communication actions that combine and complement each other, creating resonance and exchanges between them that serve to stimulate users, i.e., the ability to share the same story on Facebook and Instagram simultaneously. In turn, the direct messaging application WhatsApp has undergone constant modifications aimed at integrating tools that allow more people to participate in their groups, including the formation of communities and paid features. It is through this constant creation of stimuli that Meta seeks to maintain its power by building the "entire platform tree" as defined by Van Dijck (2021).

Couplings not only channel irritation, but they can also trigger it. There are many examples of irritation and even non-resonance by the media. For example, when Twitter (now X) was bought by the co-founder and CEO of Tesla, Elon Musk, it irritated not only Twitter users but also the media worldwide. Or the criticism (by activists and media scholars) of corporate media for reacting too late and not adequately to ecological problems.

The idea of couplings can also be integrated into the communication approach: *Information* is a coupling to the outside, that is, a reference to the extended internal or external, whereas *utterance* and *understanding* are a reference to what is going on inside the system. Since communication is the unity of information, utterance, and understanding always remain an internal ope-

ration, "the system takes recourse to its states and the irritations that it experiences to turn them into information and to process this information" (Luhmann 2013: 92). From journalism studies, we know how events (information) in the outside (or inside) world become news through a complex way of processing these events according to the journalistic way of highlighting this event and not another (Lippman 2010[1922]). There is always a selection mechanism applied (see the research about news value e.g. Warren 1934; Galtung & Ruge 1965) to deal with the abundance of external events. For example, how the journalistic agenda is created, how sources are accessed, and how information is selected. The system works within its mode of operation, self-referentially. With this internal mode of rules of selection of what information can pass the gatekeeper, the system marks its boundaries. The system creates only certain connections and excludes others. In this way, it manages to operate by reducing complexity. Fausto Neto (2006) reflects on journalistic strategies such as trust, belief, and credibility in news production processes, which function as complexity reduction mechanisms. For him, it is not just about constructing reality, because journalists produce news from events within the framework of their production conditions/possibilities, but also about showing the "reality of construction", in other words, the journalist is a social actor who details how they construct reality. In this regard, Luhmann (2000) speaks here of two realities: the reality of events and the reality of media production.

A general form of coupling device is language: it implies "that language excludes a lot to include very little" (Luhmann 2013: 87). It is a highly selective form that uses relatively simple patterns (very few letters, for example). Reduction is here the condition for building high complexity within the social system where language serves as a coupling device between social and psychic systems. He contradicts Saussure by claiming that language is not a system. There is no supersystem organising this coupling. Language itself does not have its mode of operation, as systems do. Language must be carried out within the process of a system, i.e. within communication. Its systematic form is the result of being produced, used, and developed by a system, rather than being a system itself (Luhmann 1997: 112–113.)

Can we apply this coupling approach to computer operations? Luhmann suggests that computer operations are not elements of social systems. Instead, the computer is structurally linked to social systems (Miebach 2011: 103) as a coupling device. On the one hand, computers follow their inner logic, and on the other hand, computer operations are initiated and used within the process of a social system, i.e. within communication. Since structural couplings are to be distinguished from influence or causal determination, we have to consider that even communication technologies do not cause a direct transfer between

the system and the environment. They can only irritate (or perturb, as Maturana says) the operations of the system. This is in line with Verón (1997; 2014a) when he rejects the assumption within mediatisation theories that communication technologies determine social communication practices or that media logic would take over politics (see also Marcinkowski & Steiner 2014). These technologies are adopted (or not) within the mode of one's operation.

Because of the enormous coupling capacity of computer operations or communication technologies, Luhmann speaks of increasing knowledge, which leads to "an increase in the irritability of social systems", which also increases "the range of communication that can be understood" (Luhmann 2002b: 46. Authors' translation). For example, algorithms have rapidly become a part of many facets of life. Does it have to do with the way we communicate, that perhaps the multiplying effect of communication requires new tools for managing complexity? Or more precisely, as Nassehi asked: What problems do platforms and algorithms solve, and for whom? It is important to consider both sides of the issue, as problems and solutions are contingent rather than absolute. Additionally, solutions often lead to new problems as connections are made. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how platforms and algorithms relate problems and solutions to each other (Nassehi 2019).

In summary, the structural coupling is an answer to the question of how autopoietic and thus operationally closed systems are related to each other (and to their environment) when they have no direct connection to each other (Luhmann, 1997; 2013), or are disconnected as Verón describes it. It is also an answer to the question of how the system can maintain its boundaries to the environment and thus cope with complexity.

What Does This Mean for the Study of Mediated Communication in Light of Complexity?

Both authors agree about the important role of the observer. Verón links his social semiosis to a constant reflection on the role of the observer, attentive to the social transformations that are brought about by the mediatisation and complexification of the processes of circulation. As he puts it:

> We need, as it were, an epistemology of observation. This epistemology is also part of the history of social semiosis; it is a historical and empirical epistemology: the emergence of the institutional phenomena of second-order observer control, which we know as the emergence of modern social sciences, is a historical fact as contingent as any other phenomenon in the history of the species. (Verón 2013: 404. Authors' translation)

Methodologically, to explore what is the case in research, Luhmann claims

> …one must always have an observer in mind …. One must therefore always observe an observer, name an observer, and designate a system reference if one makes statements about the world…. One always faces the question of who says a particular thing who does something, and from which system perspective the world is seen in a particular way (and no other) …, if we wanted to know what is the case, we were unable to do so without any relativisation concerning an observer or without any instructions to observe the observer. (Luhmann 2013: 99–100)

To put it bluntly, nothing can be said that is independent of an observer because the context in which a selection of information/utterance/understanding takes place is specific. This means that observations are relative to the observer who is operating in a particular context. By introducing an observer, "a speaker or simply one to whom one attributes a statement, one relativises ontology" (Luhmann 2013: 99).

Luhmann distinguishes between the act of observation and the observer:

> Observing is viewed as an operation and the observer as a system that forms whenever such operations are not just individual events but become linked as part of a sequence that can be distinguished from the environment… We describe an operation that occurs only in the mode of an event in a certain moment … which is linked and leads to a difference between system and environment (Luhmann 2013: 101).

To observe means to make a distinction and indicate one of the different parts. This applies not only to humans but also to communication technologies. Thus, Luhmann's thinking inspires us to observe the communication practices of social actors and their interactions, but also to pay attention to the characteristics, details, and modes of operation of the various communication technologies that make up applications, media platforms, and digital social networks.

Luhmann distinguishes between first and second-order observation. First-order observation is mainly done when we take things for granted, that is when it is as a simple causal relationship, where the world is ontologically certain. The theory of second-order observation integrates the concept of the blind spot, which signifies acknowledging that an observer cannot simultaneously observe the distinction they are utilising when observing. It is only afterwards that one can reflect on why one has observed it in a particular manner and not otherwise. As scholars, our observations often involve studying how others observe, including the way journalists observe the world. As a result, scholarly obser-

vations become second-order observations that deconstruct and reveal blind spots, which, in turn, create new blind spots (Luhmann 2002a: 94–112).

So as scholars, we ask the following questions: who is the observer? And how, under what conditions is an observation made? Abstractly speaking, second-order observation relates the observed system to its environment. Verón describes this with the following words:

> If we put ourselves in the position of observers of social semiosis, as Luhmann has proposed, taking up the thinking of cybernetics, we make second-order observations. That is, we make observations of actors who are also observers. In most theories, the actors, in their first-order observational activity, do the same thing that the second-order observers intend to do with them: they reciprocally attribute certain properties, capacities, intentions, etc. to each other as a condition of their social relations (Verón 2013: 402. Authors' translation)

Conclusion

In this article, we consider how complexity can be addressed from the perspective of systems theory and semiotics. Luhmann identified close relationships between these two theories and noted talks about the "possible fusion of semiotics and systems theory" (Luhmann 2013: 209), particularly regarding second-order observation, the theory of observation, structural coupling, and self-organising systems.

For Luhmann and Verón, managing complexity in research means first and foremost applying a concept of observation (including self-observation) and description. Ultimately, the observer is essential. Nothing can be described unless it is described relative to the observer's perspective.

Observing complexity requires distinguishing between system and environment to overcome totality. To comprehend the complexity of a system, it is necessary to reduce its complexity by breaking it down into its constituent elements and their relationships, which can be achieved through second-order observation – by observing the observers. Describing complexity, therefore, relies on observers of observers of observers.

Studying mediatised communication requires an examination of the conditions and likelihood of communicative connectivity and mutual relationships. The focus lies on comprehending complexity by revealing correlations among elements, rather than merely scrutinising the elements in isolation. This shift in perspective emphasises inquiries about "how" over "what".

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The Time of the Smart Campus

Pedro Gilberto Gomes[1]

Time changes, and our desires change.
What we believe – even what we are – is ever-changing.
The world is changing, which forever
takes on new qualities.

– Luiz de Camões[2]

According to Pope Francis (2020), the issues of the digital age are pivotal in one of the most important changes characterising the world today. He contends, "We could say that the 'digital galaxy', and particularly so-called 'Artificial Intelligence', is at the centre of the change of era we are going through". Digital innovation affects all facets of life, influencing our understanding of the world and ourselves, increasingly manifest in human activities and decisions. Consequently, how we think and act is transforming (ibid). Crucial decisions, including those in the medical, economic, or social domains, now result from human will and a series of contributions from algorithms (cf. ibid).

The Pope stresses that the personal act is the point where the genuine human contribution converges with that of automatic calculation (idem). Today, understanding its object, predicting its effects, and defining its responsibilities are increasingly complex (cf. ibid).

As we have discussed in various instances (Faxina & Gomes 2016), we are no longer dealing merely with the phenomenon of using technological devices to transmit messages or as mediators of individuals' relationship with reality. On the contrary, the development of digital media is creating a new ambience, which, in turn, gives rise to a new way of being in the world (cf. Gomes 2017). Consequently, rather than witnessing the end of mediatisation, we are only on the threshold of its full development. What kind of society will emerge? What

[1] Professor in Communication Sciences, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), São Leopoldo, Brazil.

[2] First stanza of Camões' poem *Mudam-se os tempos, mudam-se as vontades, 1595. Selected Sonnets: A Bilingual Edition (2008), ed. William Baer: 70.* Luís Vaz de Camões (c. 1524 or 1525–10th June 1580) is considered Portugal's and the Portuguese language's greatest poet. His mastery of verse has been compared to that of Shakespeare, Milton, Vondel, Homer, Virgil and Dante. Author's translation.

way of life will it establish? Only time and its evolution will provide answers. Nevertheless, we can identify some clues. Paradigms that once explained reality no longer fulfil their mission. Concepts such as participation, presence, and interaction are being redefined by a generation born into social networks. Interrelationships are changing. Society can no longer do without social networks. The way of being in the world has changed.

From the perspective of a new ambience, the subject has not yet been sufficiently explored, as it goes beyond mere reflection on the media and its role in society. The concept of ambience is the consequence of a change in historical times when the question of mediatisation took centre stage. The dimension of media processes goes beyond individual facts and microphenomena; it points to collective aspects, macrophenomena, and the collective social construction based on the process of a society in a state of mediatisation. The question is: how do we approach the media process, now understood as mediatisation and the generator of a new ambience?

With the rise of digital technology, these interrelationships have become intricate and expanded, giving rise to a distinctive and sui generis ambience. In contemporary society, the human communication process benefits from the sophistication of electronic media. Communication interrelationships and media processes occur within the cultural crucible of mediatisation. The reality of a society undergoing mediatisation goes beyond and encompasses the specific dynamics it generates for communication. The social environment is altered, with the background and framework of social dynamics shaped by the assumption of digital reality. The consequence of digital virtuality is the structuring of a new way of being in the world. From this perspective, the mediatised society is a cultural womb where various social processes take place, characterising today's society. Interrelationships are imbued with semantic significance, placing them in a qualitatively different dimension from the previous way of being in society, characterised as a society of the media.

Communication and society, intertwined in the production of meaning, are articulated in this crucible of culture resulting from the emergence and extreme development of technology. It is more than just a stage in evolution; it represents a qualitative leap that establishes something entirely new in society. This movement creates an environment (referred to as a mediatised society) that shapes people's way of being in the world. The media are no longer mere instruments for enabling personal relationships; instead, they are integral to social and individual self-understanding. Identity is constructed through interaction with the media. The individual is not an "I" who uses tools as an extension of their body but understands themselves as a being who values relationships and connections through technological communication tools.

From this perspective, the mediatised society is the cultural crucible where various social processes take place. It is an ambience, a new way of being in the world that characterises today's society.

Social networks are shifting the balance of power. The logic of the media is adapting to avoid complete exclusion from the process. Today, every individual or group becomes a potential producer of their news. The original function of the media, to appropriate facts from reality and present them to a consumer audience as news, is being surpassed by the immediacy and speed of social networks. In many cases, social networks shape opinions, mobilise groups, and influence institutions. In this scenario, it can be argued that social media often works with the version of the facts rather than the facts themselves. What matters is the version circulating on the networks (cf. Gomes, n.d.).

Mediatisation, as a synthesis of a process, becomes a thesis for further development. Reality is dynamic, with a gradual dynamism of overcoming that, once achieved, metamorphoses into a new synthesis revealing a new thesis. This reality is often overlooked, both in research and in writing.

Nothing is truly new on this Earth. Everything is simultaneously new on this Earth. This is the paradox of mediatisation that I've come to understand after twenty years of research. What appears new is always the same, manifesting a structure that remains unchanged. What seems the same represents something entirely new in the social configuration. It's the dialectic of DNA – always the same yet mutant. I've been the same since birth, but I'm entirely different in my self-awareness and adult manifestation.

This dynamism is sometimes overlooked as the world undergoes a slow metamorphosis, and what is in the process of development has not yet fully emerged. Therefore, the researcher of media processes plays various roles, at times complementary and at times contradictory. In relation to the past, they function as interpreters and guardians. In the present, they act as hermeneuts, interpreting the ongoing processes. Concerning the future, they take on the roles of prophets and builders, forecasting what is to come and actively contributing to its realisation. As prophets, they express enthusiasm about the future; as builders, they take responsibility for shaping the outcome.

Media processes represent the visible aspect of mediatisation, an expression of the DNA of communication conceived from a new paradigm that needs exploration. However, the sum of all processes falls short of capturing the entirety. The challenge lies in unveiling the concealed part of the communication iceberg that constitutes the reality of mediatisation. This reality has immediate consequences for the being and existence of universities.

In the realm of higher education, the influences of techno-science are being integrated, while there is an ongoing effort to establish the necessary connec-

tion between this techno-science and the human sciences. We currently live in an information society, where digital technologies continuously shape people's thoughts, lifestyles, and actions. Those born today will soon be adept at handling smartphones, iPads, etc., while individuals of all ages cannot imagine their days without these technologies. Everything is documented, and search engines and social networks permeate the lives of individuals, particularly the younger generation, who are inseparable from digital technologies. Discovering and affirming what is human today poses a significant challenge.

The emergence of numerous projects for so-called smart cities reflects a shift beyond the commonplace concept of a smart lift. Citizens' lives are increasingly organised according to these technologies, and the social configuration is designed based on the smart cities concept. Why reference this? What relevance does it have to the university?

The university, often described as a "city of knowledge generation and transmission," is tasked with positioning itself in response to this reality and making progress in this direction. In alignment with the smart cities concept, there is now a proposal for smart campuses: universities applying digital technologies to efficiently and rapidly connect all necessary relationships within the university community, encompassing administration, teaching, and research. IT operating systems for administration and management, signalling, cameras, and online networks are already integral to life in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). In essence, the presence of so-called artificial intelligence is increasingly prevalent.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that some express reservations about institutions fully and integrally embracing digitalisation, arguing that essential human realities are not adequately covered by digital technologies. They emphasise the irreplaceable value of individual presence and participation as it has traditionally been done. Concerns are raised about the potential loss of individual identity and privacy, and these debates involve some of the most esteemed contemporary thinkers.

Indeed, the digitalisation project poses challenges that HEIs must address. Merely investing massively in technology and developing or acquiring sophisticated instruments or applications is insufficient. Viewing digital technologies solely as advanced tools for pedagogical and scientific endeavours falls short. A smart campus requires more than the utilisation of technological communication and information devices. Therefore, the technological infrastructure must be updated to move beyond the "mechanical age," ensuring compatibility with the new reality. Simultaneously, attention must be given to the understanding that technology is not neutral; it entails a shift in thinking and being (Gomes 2017). A smart campus emerges from the creation of a systemic and complex

environment where all initiatives are integrated, reflecting a new ambience beyond technological devices.

A digital campus is not merely the outcome of an innovative university but rather the result of a university immersed in an innovative environment. Innovation is not a product of action but of being deeply embedded in the culture of innovation. The university is both shaped by innovation and actively contributes to its shaping.

An unforeseen event, the COVID-19 pandemic, has accelerated the transformation of universities. The imperative of social isolation led to the suspension of face-to-face classes, prompting educational institutions to swiftly reconsider their pedagogical approaches. This resulted in the adoption of a "face-to-face at a distance" teaching-learning process, with classes being conducted synchronously in the digital environment. Campuses, for the time being, were deserted, and strict protocols were implemented for research, experiments, internships, and practical classes, while theory classes continued online.

Looking beyond the pandemic, I strongly believe that universities will not revert to their previous state but will instead leverage the discoveries and experiences of this time to craft new pedagogical models. The university's role extends beyond knowledge transmission; it is a hub of knowledge production where innovation undoubtedly plays a crucial role. The synergy between the new pedagogical process and the reimagining of research methods will be pivotal in realising the smart campus.

Globalisation is at a crucial juncture, with Artificial Intelligence poised to bring about significant changes. The boundaries of human action are fluid and liquid, as conceptualised by Baumann. Society seems to exist in a state of limbo, no longer anchored in past certainties but yet to discover new certainties to make sense of its experiences.

The challenges of mediatisation pose a modern-day riddle of the Sphinx for universities in this third millennium. The question is, who or what are the Oedipuses who will decipher these challenges? (Cf. Gomes, op. cit. s/d) This represents a pivotal crossroads for universities in our time. How can they adapt to new realities without losing their essential identity? In the face of rapid technological development, how can the human dimension be preserved? The digital world and AI are inherently numerical, and in this environment, the significance of a human voice becomes crucial.

The debate is ongoing. The Intelligent University represents a new way of being and experiencing university life (Cf. Faxina & Gomes, 2016). In navigating this landscape, both the apocalyptic and the integrative perspectives must be open to the new, which is only in its nascent stages but holds transformative potential. The concern about digital culture shifts the question from

what universities will do with digital to what kind of universities might emerge from their extensive entry into the digital domain.

There is a long way to go in this area. You could say with António Machado[3]:

Caminante, no hay camino;
se hace camino al andar.

Traveller, there is no road;
you make your own path as you walk.[4]

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[3] From the poem "Caminante, no hay camino" or "Traveler, There Is No Road" Antonio Machado (1875–1939), Andalusian poet.

[4] Translated by Mary G. Berg and Dennis Maloney, https://masspoetry.org/machado–cullen–the–favorite–poem–project/

Digital Competence as a Boundary Concept in the Mediatisation of the Future of (Swedish) Education

Michael Forsman[1]

Introduction

One of the recurring themes in mediatisation research concerns the relation between education and digitalisation and how media conditions and saturates the logics and practices of the educational sector. Most of this research has focused on how education adapts to digital educational technologies by substituting and changing the practices of teaching and learning, school administration, and classroom management (Breiter 2014). These rather direct forms of the effects of mediatisation concern communication and structuration *inside* schools. Other research has focused more on indirect effects, for example, the impact that journalistic representations of schools may have on educational governance (Rawohle & Lingard 2014). Another research area is how K12-schools respond to the deeply mediatised lives that the students live *outside* of the classroom, by training them in terms of media- and information literacy (MIL) and digital competence (Forsman 2020).

In other words, we need to ask not only what mediatisation does to education but also what educational governance does with mediatisation. The ambition of this article is to contribute to this discussion by offering a non-media-centric and non-tech-oriented perspective on the institutional relations between education and (digital) mediatisation. I do this by studying the emergence and implications of the concept *digital competence* by suggesting that it signifies both a regulative adjustment to rapid digitalisation and a critical response to the consequences of deep mediatisation.

Digital competence derives from the area of transnational policymaking (EU, OECD) and it can be described as an evolving *boundary concept* that mediates between different stakeholders and levels of governance (Ilomäkki et al. 2016). Digital competence is also a widely acknowledged concept that is often used by different stakeholders in different contexts and for different pur-

[1] Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden.

poses. During the last decade, many reports (transnational and national) have described and suggested what kind of knowledge, skills, and attitudes digital competence is supposed to cover (e.g. Ala-Mutka 2011; Ferrari 2013; Vuokari et al. 2016, 2022). Several countries have aligned digital competence to their national curriculums and course syllabuses, Sweden being one of them (Godhe 2019).

My take on digital competence as a governing concept that aligns mediatisation with education is inspired by Hjarvard's (2013) institutional approach to mediatisation and I share his ambition to address large-scale and long-term structural changes in the relationship between media and different institutions in society (e.g. education). I am also encouraged by Hjarvard's (2013: 4) invitation to combine different theoretical ambitions as heuristic tools in the development of mediatisation research. It is in line with that I suggest that digital competence could be considered as being a so-called basic concept (Berenskoetter 2016; Koselleck 2002, 2004), which in turn can be connected to terms such as anticipatory governance (Flyverbom & Garsten 2021), soft power (Nye 2004), and certain forms of sociotechnical imaginaries (Jasanoff 2015; Rahm 2023). I argue that this approach can help us understand more about the relationship between the educational system's logic and mediatisation's logic. I also connect this ambition to "critical studies of educational technology" where researchers like Selwyn (2016) and Williamson (2017) have the ambition to open "the black box" of digitalisation concerning public education, with the theoretical and analytical means of political economy, ideology critique, and studies of dominant narratives, concepts, and imaginaries. It is in relation to the last-mentioned approach that I position this article.

The article starts with further development of this theoretical framework, followed by two empirical sections. The first one describes the emergence of digital competence and its role on the transnational agenda. Here I use material from the EU:'s *DIGCOMP* framework as an example. The second empirical section describes how digital competence, through official reports (SOU), and the work of the National Agency for Education, became a central concept in the digitalisation of Swedish K12 education. In the third and final section, I connect the elements of the rationale given here.

Mediatising and Anticipating Digital Competence

It is by now well known that the term *mediatisation* does not refer to the concrete act of communication through mediation, but instead to an ongoing and long-term meta-historical process that is characterised by a growing dependence on the technologies, institutions, and media logics (Krotz 2009). This

means that we cannot conceive of media as being separate from culture and society. It also means that we are interested in how structural transformations of media are related to changes in the institutions and everyday aspects of human communication (Hjarvard 2013). mediatisation has been described as a "moulding force" in modernity and it can also be compared to other meta-historical processes, such as globalisation (Hepp 2013). In other words, mediatisation stands not just for a continuous development of media technologies and general historical changes, but for a certain technological, tempo-spatial, and structural logic. There are also suggestions that we have now entered a new era of *deep mediatisation,* that is characterised by the post-mass media condition, and defined by ubiquitous and converging network-based media; that are mobile, personalised, and participatory; and fuelled by algorithms, automation, datafication, platformisation (Hepp 2020).

There are different approaches to mediatisation. One of them is a social constructivist and phenomenological interest in how mediatisation affects everyday life practices, meaning-making, and identity formations on the micro level (Couldry & Hepp 2018). Another approach that is discussed by Bolin (2014) that suggests that we need to understand mediatisation also in relation to "the political economy of signs", referring to Baudrillard's discussion about objects and images. What I propose in this article can possibly complement Bolin's suggestion, since I conduct a conceptual study where I propose that *digital competence* is a sign and conceptual vehicle for both an adaptation to rapid digitalisation and a reaction to deep mediatisation.

However, my approach is first and foremost related to Hjarvard's (2013) *institutional approach* to medialisation, wherein he underlines the relationship between media and other domains in society seldom are linear or direct, nor should be understood as a form of technological determinism. What Hjarvard instead suggests is that this relation should be regarded as being dynamic and dialectic and characterised by co-development and reciprocity. In line with this, I suggest that digital competence, by being used often in reports that offer complex frameworks, has become a *resource* for and a form of *regulation* of how the educational systems adapt to digitalisation and respond to deep mediatisation. This could be described using Hjarvard's (2013) terminology (cognitive schemas, normative compasses, mental scripts) as the expectations for individuals to engage with mediatisation reflexively and responsibly.

This production of future directions and subjects can be related to what Jasanoff (2015: 19) calls sociotechnical imaginaries by which she means "collectively held, institutionally stabilised, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and techno-

logy". Some of these imaginaries are related to education (Knox et al. 2020; Rahm 2023; Selwyn 2016; Williamson 2018) and forms for *anticipatory governance*, i.e., "knowledge-based, performative phenomenon that addresses potential and desirable futures and operates as a mode of shaping, controlling and orchestrating organisations" [by making] "phenomena, problems and opportunities visible, knowable and possible to act on" (Flyverbom & Garsten 2021: 3f).

A Conceptual Approach

It is hard to discuss the future of education and the future of citizens in a digital society without referring to *digital competence*. This opens the door to conceptual analysis.

The classical approach to concept analysis is *the scientific approach* that focuses on etymology and definitions, linguistics and semantic clusters, empirical meanings, and how concepts travel in time and across social space (Berenskoetter 2016: 164f). From this perspective, we can note that "digital competence" is constituted through a combination of two concepts: digital and competence. While the semantic cluster around "digital" refers to technology, the semantic cluster around competence is more related to a behavioural understanding of how subjects perform in non-standard situations (Pikkarainen 2014).

It can here also be noted that *competence* stems from the Classical Latin term *competere* (be sound, capable, applicable), which coincides with *com* (together) and *petere* (attack, compete, desire) (Pikkarainen, 2014: 622). Our modern understanding of competence points to task-based skills, individual flexibility, and competence training, meant to meet the needs of a rapidly changing labour market. This approach to competence came with American behavioural psychology in the 1950s before it was profiled in the 1980s and 1990s during the shift from industrial to post-industrial society when there was a large demand for competence development (SOU 1991: 56). The use of competence thus indicates a shift from formal knowledge and academic disciplines towards a more practice- and work-based idea about the individual's capacity to mobilise skills and attitudes to meet the demands of new and complex contexts (Pikkarainen 2014; c.f. OECD 2018). Another important observation to bring is that digital competence often is implicitly used in a normative and prescriptive way.

Another observation to make is that "digital competence" is used rather normatively in reports that often present rather extensive and complex frameworks, with main categories and subcategories, themes, indicators, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria, that are meant to describe and define digital competence, in relation to future orientations. This can, in turn, be related to a second approach to concept analysis, strongly influenced by Michel Foucault's

studies of governance and bio-politics, in a less linguistic and more political (critical) approach, since it explores how concepts become reified and relate to the production of power and knowledge, through their use across different social domains (Berenskoetter 2016: 168f).

A third form of conceptual analysis, with a connection to political language and processes of governance, is more historical in its approach and mainly connected to German historian Reinhard Koselleck (2002, 2004) and his temporal hermeneutics. What Koselleck wants to understand is how certain concepts become hegemonic by functioning both as indicators of change and by being transformative forces in themselves (Berenskoetter 2016: 162f)).

A central part of Koselleck's approach is his discussion about "basic concepts" (Grundbegriffe). Koselleck argues that certain concepts become basic when they not only exist as a specialised term but have become a fundamental cultural code, that permeates political language and public discourse. Hereby they come to govern major organisations and movements, and they become objects for research about and with them. This means that basic concepts also take on a central role in everyday life. In other words, they become indispensable and something that we cannot do without (Berenskoetter 2016). It can for example be difficult to discuss "the future of education" without reference to digitalisation or digital competence. Basic concepts are thus both descriptive and regulative, and they are at the same time objects and premises for the debates and processes they evoke.

Another dimension of basic concepts is that they are of temporal and teleological importance concerning modernity and the idea of progression (Berenskoetter 2016). They are also connected to the dialectic between historical experience and historical expectations (Cordero 2016). Among the examples of basic concepts that Koselleck suggests, we can find the following: State, Revolution, Crises, Development, Future, Utopia, Democracy, and Citizenship. It can be debated if digital competence is fully qualified as a basic concept in the sense that Koselleck put into this term. However, it is notable that "digital" tends to appear in combination with some of the basic concepts suggested by Koselleck, for example in *digital revolution, digital citizen,* and *digital future*. Still, the temporal and political inclinations and indications of a major technological and societal shift with digital competence as a basic concept need to be further investigated.

Transnational and Loose

Digital competence emerges from the term digital literacy, which was used during an earlier phase of computerisation, digitalisation, for example by Gilster

(1997), who suggested that the post-typographic situation and the development of "new media" required new forms of literacy that can help citizens use and navigate networked technologies and interpret digital messages (c.f. Bawden 2008). After the turn of the millennium, digital literacy morphed into digital competence. One step in this direction was when the OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development) defined digital competence as a necessary *21st-century skill* (OECD 2005). Hereby suggesting that all citizens, and not least younger generations, must acquire a certain level of digital competence to be active in society and find a position in the economy of the future (Ala-Mutka 2011).[2] Digital competence has also been associated with terms such as digital natives, millennium learners, employability, entrepreneurship, and innovation (Gallardo-Echenique et al. 2015). It can also be connected to communication, democracy, and critical thinking, as well as to personal development, happiness, creativity, personal expression, participation, and responsibility (Erstad et al. 2021; Vuorikari et al. 2022).

Digital competence stands for a combination of *knowledge (*concepts and facts)*, skills* (abilities to carry out processes), and *attitudes (*dispositions to act), and it has for a long time been central to reports from the OECD, such as the triennial report *Trends Shaping Education,* or in projections and prognoses given by *Future of Education and Skills 2030* (OECD 2018). Also, the European Commission (EC) has used digital competence extensively in its agendas and strategies for competitive and sustainable growth. It was in 2006 that the European Parliament and Council first put forward digital competence as one of eight key competencies that were suggested under the umbrella term *Lifelong Learning*. Digital competence has also been described as being a *transversal competence*, since it is considered to be necessary for the development of the other seven skills that reside under the umbrella of Life Learning, i.e., Communication, Citizenship**,** Critical thinking, Collaboration, Creativity, Information literacy, and Self-directed learning (EC 2019).

One aspect of the long-term engagement that EC has with digital competence, has been a more than a decade-long venture with the formatting of a

[2] In 1997 OECD launched a program for the Definition and Selection of Competencies (*DeSeCo)* which was a conceptual framework meant to identify key competencies that could help define overarching goals for the educational systems in relation to lifelong learning and systems for international assessments (e.g., PISA) (Ananiadou & Claro 2009; Rychen & Salganik 2003). Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) should also be mentioned here. P21 was a constellation of US-tech-corporations (Apple, Cisco, Microsoft Dell et al.) that also emphasised digital competence as an inevitable skill for the future. As Voogt & Roblin (2012) and others have shown, there have been several other and similar initiatives made in collaborations between major ed-tech industry interest, national educational boards, and transnational bodies such as EC, OECD, UNESCO.

Framework for Developing and Understanding Digital Competence in Europe (DIGCOMP). The ambition behind the DIGCOMP framework has been to *identify* the main components of digital competence and *develop* a conceptual framework with guidelines, as well as *propose* a road map with descriptors for all levels of learners. In the first report that presented the DIGCOMP framework (Ferrari 2013), digital competence was defined broadly as "a confident, critical and creative use of ICT to achieve goals related to work, employability, learning, leisure, inclusion and/or participation in society" (ibid: 2). This first version of the DIGCOMP-framework also suggests five general areas of digital competence: information, communication, content-creation, safety, and problem-solving; all of them are related to ICT (information and communication technologies). For each one of these areas, there are brief descriptions, plus a list of three to six competencies, as well as several dimensions (proficiency level, examples of knowledge, skills, attitudes, applications to purpose in terms of learning and employment). So far there have been two updates of the DIGCOMP framework, both of which have the subtitle: *The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens.* This indicates that the framework takes a wider perspective than just K12. However, the importance of education in relation to the future is clearly underlined.

In *DIGCOMP 2.0* (Vuorikari et al. 2016) the understanding of digital technology, digital communication, and digital content is upgraded to reflect changes that have occurred in the digital landscape. The importance of citizens understanding and being able to do programming and coding is underlined and it is suggested that it is now time to talk of "digital environments" rather than about "being online" since we have reached a new stage of digitalisation (c.f. deep mediatisation). In DIGCOMP 2.2 (Vuorikari et al., 2022), over 250 new examples of emerging themes are presented. These examples aim to assist in revising and updating national curriculums to align with technological advancements and the evolving needs of young learners. This is particularly important in an era focused on green solutions and sustainability and characterised by the prevalence of Artificial Intelligence, Virtual and Augmented Reality, Robotisation, the Internet of Things, Datafication, Misinformation, and Disinformation (ibid: 1f).

There have been several other reports published under the DIGCOMP umbrella. Some of them with a clear connection to the educational sector (Redecker 2017). One such example is the *DigCompEdu* (The European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educator). This report aims to help teachers to identify individual levels of digital competence as well as support them in developing this further, by proposing a framework, with six areas and 22 competencies. *DigCompOrg* (Digitally Competent Educational Organisa-

tion) addresses school staff more generally and suggests seven key elements and 15 sub-elements; for each of these, there are descriptors (a total of 74). This complexity and scope can make one look for a somewhat more concise description of digital competence. This is how EC described digital competence in 2018:

> Digital competence involves the confident, critical, and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competencies related to intellectual property, related questions, problem-solving, and critical thinking.[3]

The conceptualisations and frameworks described above are crafted by policymakers and then implemented by professionals, such as teachers. The reports that perform these processes of governance are motivated by new and emerging digital technologies, anticipations of future job markets, and suggestions on how to improve public education.

The role that the concept of digital competence has in these processes can be described as being fuzzy and "loose" since digital competence is a concept that is still emerging, and functioning as a *boundary concept* that seems to be: "plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (Ilomäki et al. 2016:656). This is a conceptual ontology that can be related to what Flyverbom & Garsten (2021:7) refer to as "the capacity to guide organisational processes of anticipating the future". This form of future-making is mediated by *templates for anticipatory governance* such as statistics and tables, visual and graphic design, illustrative examples and scenarios, narratives and speculations, indicators, and assessment criteria (ibid).

Sweden Wants To Be the Best

"Sweden should be the best in the world at taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation" – this goal was articulated more than ten years ago in the portal sentence of Sweden's national digitalisation strategy (Regeringskansliet 2011). The goal remains (Regeringskansliet 2017) although a lot has happened since this was first articulated, not least in terms of digital develop-

[3] Council Recommendation on *Key Competences for Life-long Learning*, 22 May 2018, ST 9009 2018 INIT.

ment. Another paragraph from 2011 that still stands suggests that "the modernisation of Sweden begins in schools" (Digitaliseringsrådet 2018).

In 2011, the Swedish government specified 22 societal areas where digitisation was seen as being the prerequisite for true progression. Among these 22 areas, we find: "Schools and education" and "Digital Competence". In 2012, the Swedish government appointed a Digitalisation Commission and assigned them to present digital agendas for all the 22 suggested areas. Between 2012 and 2016 the Commission published three reports (SOU) and all of these are characterised by a strong belief in the possibilities of digitalisation: "We have so far only seen the beginning of the abilities of digitisation" is a statement from the preface to the Commission's first report: *A digital agenda at the service of people – a bright future can be our*s (SOU 2014:13).

So how did the Commission approach digital competence? In their final report, *For Digitalisation in Time* (SOU 2016:89), the Commission mentions digital competence frequently. There are also references to how the OECD, EU, and other organisations have argued for the importance of digital competence. However, in the second part of the report *Make Sweden in the Future – Digital Competence* (SOU 2015: 28), the Commission defines digital competence as: "The extent to which one is familiar with digital tools and services and can keep up with digital developments and their impact on one's life" (2015: 16). In this report, digital competence is described also in terms of four general abilities.

- Skills to search for information, communicate, interact, and produce digitally;
- Skills to use digital tools and services;
- Understanding of the transformation that digitalisation brings to society with its opportunities and risks;
- Motivation to participate in the development.

As we can see, digitalisation refers both to a technological transition and to a social transformation, and for these to happen, everyone needs to have a certain attitude towards digitalisation. The Commission also writes that "digital competence is today something that is required throughout life – and even more so in the future" (SOU 2015: 28: 12. Author's translation).

This could be related to what Wormbs (2010) calls *the digital imperative*, which refers to the promise of a digital future that will be efficient, inclusive, and comfortable. Another dimension of the digital imperative concerns different constructions of "the ideal citizens" (Forsman 2020). Dickel & Schrape (2017) exhibit a similar line of thought in their article "The logic of digital utopianism" where they describe digitalisation as a "futurised concept" that is

based on the promise that digital technologies eventually will solve the problems of the present, but for this to happen, the technological development and its markets must be kept from major interferences or restrictions from the authorities. Another condition for the accomplishment of the expected future is that public institutions such as schools are positive and adaptive to digital transformation.

Educating Competence

It was through the Digitalisation Commission that digital competence became a key concept in Swedish K12 education: When the National Agency for Education (NAE) (Skolverket) was commissioned by the government to present a strategy for 2017–2022 on how to increase digitalisation in the Swedish K12 system, the assignment included a request for a special focus on how to develop digital competence among students and teachers, as well as how other members of the school staff should develop. The strategy suggested by the NAE focused on the development of what they termed *adequate digital competence* (Skolverket 2019). By using adequate as a prefix, NAE left it quite open to teachers and school principals to decide on the local level what to consider as being "adequate" concerning different school subjects, age groups, student abilities, staff, etc. One of the reasons why NAE chose to not go into detailed descriptions or instructions regarding digital competence was that the technological and social development led by digitalisation is so rapid that it makes it almost impossible to predict what will happen, even from a five-year perspective.

It was also around this time, that digital competence was connected to the national curriculum and its course syllabuses. Those changes in the curriculum, in terms of digital competence, that attracted the most public interest was the implementation of computational thinking and programming. A reinforcement of source-critical thinking was also widely acknowledged. On a more comprehensive level, NAE summarised digital competence in terms of four overarching capacities (Skolverket 2017a, b).

- To understand the impact that digitalisation has on society and the individual;
- Be able to use and understand digital tools and media;
- Have a critical and responsible approach to digital technology;

- Be able to solve problems and put ideas into action in a creative way by using digital technology.[4]

As we can see there are some obvious similarities between these four principles and the four principles that the Digitalisation Committee suggested in 2015. However, in relation to the Swedish K12 curriculum and its syllabuses, notably, digital competence sometimes is used to refer to technical skills (using digital tools, problem-solving), and at other times to refer to cultural and civic skills (communication, identity, critical thinking). Again, digital competence is a *boundary concept* that is used by different interests, in different contexts, for partly different purposes, to adapt and relate to technological and societal transformations. We have also seen that digital competence can be part of a dominant ideology, as well as used as a biopolitical requirement in the qualification, socialisation, and subjectification of the future citizen (Biesta 2005; Forsman 2020). This resonates with how digital competence is conceptually and discursively articulated in reports and frameworks from the OECD and EU but also in how Google, Microsoft, Apple, and others with major interests in the transnational ed-tech sector (Selwyn 2016; Williamson 2017) articulate the future.

The New Language of Learning and Beyond

Before concluding I want to connect digital competence to what Gert Biesta who is a professor of public education and the philosophy of education calls "the new language of learning" (2005: 54f). What Biesta is referring to is an increasingly influential and instrumental discourse on learning, that contrasts a more explorative learning as well as the long-term ideals of *Bildung*. Biesta describes this construction of preconceived "learning outcomes" in relation to assumptions and expectations regarding future labour markets as a process of "learnification". This is a process that makes education into a market, with students as customers and teachers as service providers. Biesta argues that this transformation is related to and can be explained by four structural changes, namely: the erosion of the welfare state, the questioning of the modernist project of education, new theories of knowledge and learning, and an individualised ideal of learning. To this list, I would add rapid digitalisation and deep mediatisation.

In his discussion about changes in the philosophical, pedagogical, and political foundations of public education, Biesta does not say much about digitalisa-

[4] Translation by the author.

tion. Still, it seems reasonable to think of digital competence as a (basic) concept that belongs in "the new language of learning" since it refers to an instrumental and individualised approach to (lifelong) learning, and the demands of future job markets (21st Century Skills). Another connection between learnification and digitalisation could be *learning analytics*, which is used to collect, measure, and report data on how individual students progress and perform in relation to predefined learning outcomes, in the context of platformisation and datafication, often with references to the benefits of personalised learning through automated feedback, AL and machine learning (Knox et al. 2020).

Conclusion

I have in this article used Hjarvard's (2013) institutional approach to mediatisation to make a brief and tentative conceptual analysis of *digital competence*. I have shown that digital competence refers to certain forms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and that it tends to appear coupled with terms such as lifelong learning and 21st-century skills. Digital competence has also been extensively used in transnational reports and frameworks over the last 20 years. It has also been aligned with the Swedish national curriculum. Furthermore, I have suggested that digital competence could be considered as being a so-called basic concept (Berenskoetter 2016; Koselleck 2002, 2004) since it prescribes progress and is related to how historical experiences and expectations regarding the qualification, socialisation, and subjectification of future workers, citizens, and individuals, is formed.

In the realm of mediatisation research, digital competence can be considered a response to the ongoing and rapid advancement of digitalisation and deep mediatisation. This term, as outlined in reports and the intricate frameworks they entail, in addition to how it is linguistically and mentally conceptualised encompasses both critical awareness and the instrumental and psychological adaptation to technological changes and evolving modes of communication. From the prism of critical studies of educational technologies, digital competence can be said to resonate with a deeply mediatised sociotechnical imaginary and "chronological imperialism" (Facer, 2012: 98) that may subject students to neoliberal governance and corporate interests in a way that can restrict possibilities for both individual freedom and social progression.

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Digital Frictions

Anne Kaun[1]

Introduction

En folkhemsdikt *av Göran Greider (1995)*
(…)
Perioden från 1975 till idag har varit en parentes.
Den födde inga drömmar större än det egna livet.
Nu vidtar den nya tiden, ännu oförlöst,
Delvis just för att bilden av det förgångna är så stark:
Arvet från Folkhemmet måste vara ett avsked, från jorden, från fabrikerna
(…)
Verkligheten förändras, inte på de djupaste värdena.

Ty dessa värden, oundgängliga, lever
i det vi måste överge för att låta det växa på nytt.

Uppbrottet från denna tid 1945–75:
Det förflutnas slutliga möjlighet.

"A People's Home", a poem by Göran Greider (1995)
(…)
The period from 1975 until today was a parenthesis.
It didn't give birth to any dreams larger than one's own life.
Now the new times are taking over, still unborn,
Partly because the picture of the past is still so strong:
The legacy of the people's home must be a goodbye, from the world, from the factories
(…)
Reality changes, not the deepest values.

For these values, indispensable, are alive
In that, we need to leave to make space for the new.

The breakup with this time 1945–75:
The final possibility of the past[2]

[1] Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden.
[2] Göran Greider is a Swedish journalist, author, and poet. *En folkshemdikt* poem was published in his collection *När fabrikerna tystnar*, in 1995. Author's translation.

In his long poem, the author and columnist Göran Greider follows the historical changes from the emergence and heyday of the welfare state in Sweden between 1945 and 1975. After that, he argues the ideals and ideas of the welfare state for all – the people's home – dissolved. In the end, that is included here, he remains hopeful for the future but looks back and dwells on earlier achievements. I take this poem as a starting point for my chapter to discuss a new period of the welfare state, a welfare state that is intermingled, steered by and steering digital technologies: the digital welfare state.

I base this chapter on fieldwork that I have conducted within different projects that investigate the status and development of the digital welfare state in Europe particularly in Sweden. This is, of course, a particular context of ideas and realities of the welfare state. The welfare state in its European expression emerged in the context of the double crisis of the Second World War and the Great Depression. Both crises had cruel implications for large parts of the world's societies. In the Swedish context, Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson claimed the notion of *The People's Home* to conceptualise what welfare and the welfare state might mean in a radio address in 1928. Today the welfare state and welfare provision are increasingly linked with digital technologies. This entanglement between welfare and digital technologies is also in focus for me here.

During the past years, I have been studying digital welfare from a citizen perspective which means I have been taking the viewpoint of people implied in digital infrastructures, but who rarely have a say in how these infrastructures are formed and implemented. Counter to the visions of digital solutions, many citizens repeatedly encounter problems, obstacles, and barriers while interacting with the infrastructures of the digital welfare state. These encounters are digital frictions, a concept that I will elaborate on in the following sections. But before delving into the concept of digital frictions and digital welfare, I would like to start with three scenes:

Scene 1: at the Public Library

A man has been sitting for at least 30 minutes in front of one of the workstations. He is getting increasingly nervous and impatient, in a desperate rather than angry manner. At some point, he decides he needs help and turns to the librarian working at the information desk. "I need help, I need to submit a form to the Swedish insurance agency, and I just cannot make it work. Can you please, please help me?". The librarian hesitates for a second, exhales, and fol-

lows him to the computer with the note "I guess it's a problem with your *Bank ID*[3], it's usually the *Bank ID* that is causing problems".

Scene 2: at the Welfare Service Center

A woman is sitting in the waiting area for her number to be called. After 10 minutes, a service worker wearing a green shirt with white letters saying *e-days do yourself an e-favour* enters the area, checks a smartphone, and calls the next number in line. The woman who waited patiently approaches him. They walk over to a computer station at a high desk together, and the service worker asks what she needs help with. The woman explains that she has received an email about her child benefits. She is asked to submit additional information from her employer about her salary. She is directed to the application or website of the insurance agency, but just cannot find her way. She needs help. The caseworker unlocks the screen of the stationary computer and helps the woman to navigate the platform, while never touching the keyboard or mouse herself. The woman is supposed to learn by doing the clicking herself. Help to digital self-help is the slogan of the welfare service centres.

Scene 3: at the Jail

A man in his forties has been waiting for his trial for 8 months. He has been placed in solitary confinement by the prosecutor, which means he will only meet his lawyer and potentially volunteers from the Red Cross. No family members or friends are allowed to visit, and there is only one designated incarcerated person whom he gets to hang out with for a total of three hours per day. He has been sleeping badly since the first night, and this pattern has not improved. He finally called for help from the staff describing his problem. One day later they bring a Fitbit to his room. "you will wear this device for the next week and we will know whether you need help with your sleep". When the results come in the man is surprised. According to the wearable device, he has been sleeping exceptionally well. He feels the exhaustion of the past months running through his body.

These are stories that I have encountered in this or similar ways in the past years during my fieldwork in marginal spaces of the Swedish welfare state: at public libraries, welfare service centres, and prisons. All problems that emerge in the stories are expressions of digital frictions in the context of welfare, scenes

[3] Electronic identification system in Sweden.

in which human collaboration is crucial: being lost in public agency applications, trying to do the right thing on platforms that are hard to navigate, digital devices telling different stories than our own embodied experiences. They seem both mundane and special, outside of what many might have experienced in connection with digital welfare, but – and that is my main argument – turning to the margins and the digital frictions that emerge there will help us improve not only digital services for the marginalised and vulnerable groups, but for all. And it tells us something universal about being human that takes shape in a situated, relational, specific manner.

Digital Welfare

Why is it important to consider welfare? According to Raymond Williams (1976), welfare is a keyword of modern society. It was initially used to indicate happiness or prosperity. Employing the term to depict organised welfare through institutionalised provision for basic needs first appeared in the 20th century, and the idea of the welfare state was only mentioned during the Second World War. The notion of the welfare state is built on normative ideas of universalism, equality, and decommodification (Jakobsson, Lindell & Stiernstedt 2022). Based on these principles, the welfare state relates to measures to enhance social cohesion, as well as a balancing of risks within society while preserving human dignity (Jakobsson et al. 2022). One fundamental principle of welfare is the idea of providing for basic needs to all, but a more ambitious outlook considers people's different capabilities and promotes measures for human flourishing accordingly.

With digitalisation and datafication, scholars have increasingly engaged with the shifts in welfare provision conditions and possibilities. The sociologist Marion Fourcade (2021) considers the re-configuration of the relationship – the social contract – between the citizen and the welfare state that is increasingly mediated by digital data and technologies for algorithmic automation. Hence, the flourishing of all is gradually becoming more dependent and intermingled with digital, data infrastructures and algorithmic automation. This shift is, however, not happening without friction, which leads me to the notion of digital friction.

Digital Frictions

According to the Cambridge dictionary, friction is "the force that makes it difficult for one object to slide along the surface of another or to move through a liquid or gas"; or, as anthropologist Anna Tsing (2005) puts it, friction emerges "where the rubber hits the road". Minna Ruckenstein (2023) highlights that the

notion of friction is also popular among engineers and designers. It is mainly used to depict something to be diminished as much as possible in the design process. Engineers and designers primarily seek to develop perfect human-machine loops. The main goal is frictionless living enabled by computational tools, a perfectly smooth symbiosis of man and machine. As the scenes above indicate, frictions highlight and make visible inequalities and unveil the well-oiled human-machine collaboration as impossible (Ruckenstein 2023). However, for Tsing and Ruckenstein friction is not standing merely in the way of a tech dream but also a societally attuned notion that relates to resilience. Tsing and Ruckenstein argue that friction makes connections influential and effective; friction is productive and makes "experiences stick". Or in Tsing's words "hegemony is made as well as unmade with friction" (2005:6. Quoted in Ruckenstein 2023: 136) At the same time, frictions have a potential for resistance, as they can "get[s] in the way of the smooth operation of global power" (Ruckenstein 2023: 8). Similarly, Jutta Haider and Olof Sundin (2019) develop the notion of frictions of relevance to highlight encounters with digital information infrastructures that have become dependent on but that do not deliver what we expect. They use Google search results that include sites that diverge from our political positions or recommendations that are far from what we would expect to be recommended. In those encounters, we become aware of the information infrastructure ungirding much of our daily experiences. This might result in a greater awareness of digital infrastructures that we otherwise take for granted, they argue.

The scenes above illustrate that the smooth, frictionless interaction with the digital welfare machine is rarely the case. Even with new people-centered methods of designing digital tools frictions remain and will remain. So, what do we do with that? Is the solution to develop better platforms? To improve digital skills among citizens? Will there ever be a smooth digital welfare state?

Concluding remarks

Instead of striving for the perfect digital welfare machine, we might need to embrace and sit with the inconvenience, the ambivalence, and the digital frictions. As Minna Ruckenstein (2023) argues,

> the ambivalence that accompanies reactions to corporate uses of personal data calls for approaches that do not try to smooth tensions away but can comfortably address the contradictions and balancing acts involved. (2003: 8)

In that sense, even with digital tools life is never a smooth ride, but we need to address the tensions and inequalities that become visible when we encounter friction. Why are certain groups having trouble with online platforms while others are striving? What are the patterns of exclusion? How are interactions with welfare institutions that are not only about control but very much about care changing through digital mediation? These are questions we need to urgently engage with.

On a more normative level, we need to rethink the role of digital tools for welfare provisions. Instead of aiming for a perfectly smooth welfare machine, we collectively need to imagine a system of welfare that provides for all according to their needs and capabilities. Digital tools might be part of the process of finding out how and in what ways this can be done, but they should not be the starting point.

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II
Extensions

The Circulation of Disinformation on Platforms in Brazil

Aline Roes Dalmolin[1]

Introduction

Disinformation has become a prominent global issue, presenting a complex challenge with far-reaching impacts on political, economic, religious, psychological, and educational dynamics in society. Its detrimental effects, including democratic erosion, are exacerbated by declining trust in social institutions and legitimacy crises (Bennett and Livingstone 2018). This concept is closely linked to phenomena such as digital violence, post-truth, neopopulism, extremism, conspiracy theories, hate speech, intolerance, and polarisation, giving rise to intricate ethical, social, political, and educational challenges in contemporary society.

Far-right political actors have strategically employed disinformation to amplify engagement on platforms, exploiting algorithmic logic to increase visibility and mobilise followers. The algorithmic tendency to present similar content to users further reinforces individuals' engagement in this discursive alignment, creating a destructive cycle of hatred and disinformation.

The challenge of combating fake news has become deeply ingrained in the daily lives of Brazilians, steadily intensifying over the past decade. Key events, such as recent presidential elections, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the anti-democratic events on 8 January 2023, in Brasília, exemplify how the circulation of disinformation has infiltrated social processes in the country.

In this context, this chapter provides a brief overview of events marked by disinformation content in Brazil. It also introduces conceptual and terminological definitions to address the issue of disinformation circulation on social media platforms, placing it within the framework of platformisation and mediatisation processes. This subject has gained increasing attention in Brazil and globally, with numerous research projects, conferences, debates, working

[1] Associate Professor in Communication Sciences at the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil. Visiting Professor at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, from August to December, 2023.

groups, calls for papers in academic journals, and organised books, among other initiatives, in recent years. We position one of the most relevant issues on the horizon of platform studies at the intersection of this phenomenon.

We understand the interconnection between disinformation and digital hatred within the concept of mediatised society during the process of platformisation (Van Dijck, Poell, and De Wall 2018). Disinformation, as a political phenomenon, can be understood through the lens of the mediatisation of everyday life (Verón 1997; 2004; 2013), a condition in which the ways of life of social actors are influenced by mediatised interactions in their modes of living, actions, and perceptions of time and space, thereby complicating sociability.

Platformisation refers to the process in which information primarily circulates through platforms – digital architectures designed to organise interactions between users, with a focus on systematic data collection, algorithmic processing, circulation, and monetisation of data (Van Dijck, Poell, and De Wall 2018). According to the authors, platforms cannot be viewed in isolation; their functioning occurs within an ecosystem where a network of interconnected platforms is governed by a particular set of mechanisms.

Another aspect worth considering is how these discourses circulate within the mediatised context. Circulation is a dynamic process that significantly influences the intricate dynamics of mediatised society, characterised by bifurcations and non-linear communication (Verón 2008). Braga (2012) posits that circulation manifests in society through communication circuits, extending beyond the mere circulation of products or direct media moments. Instead, it involves complex social interactions and ongoing processes. According to the author, these circuits are "culturally practised, recognisable by their users, and can be described and analysed by researchers" (Braga 2012: 41).

Hence, understanding disinformation involves viewing it as a product of communication circuits within the context of mediatised society during the process of platformisation. This perspective provides a theoretical and methodological approach to comprehend these communication processes in their entirety, avoiding reduction to instrumental perspectives or viewing them as mere byproducts of political strategies. Recognising disinformation within its social, technological, and cultural entanglements becomes essential in addressing the social urgency to counter its effects, given the threat it poses to democracy and societal equilibrium.

The Context of Disinformation: Some Remarks

Disinformation is not a new issue and has historical roots predating the digital and mass media periods[2], Highlighted by various authors (Alves and Maciel 2020; Quessada 2022), historical instances of disinformation date back well before the digital and mass media eras. An illustrative case is the "Great Moon Hoax," a series of articles published in the New York Sun in 1835, falsely claiming the discovery of life on the Moon (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). World War II also witnessed disinformation, including false German radio stations transmitted in the UK (Alves; Maciel 2020) and the 1943 "Faux Soir" case, where the Belgian resistance circulated a fake edition of the French newspaper Le Soir in Belgium as a satirical act against the Nazis and collaborators in the country (Grey, Bonegru, and Venturini 2020). Moreover, the Soviet Union manipulated images during this period by "erasing" Stalin's adversaries from photographs as they fell out of favour (Alves and Maciel 2020).

Despite historical parallels in the motivations behind disinformation, the contemporary logarithmic logic of disinformation hinders a direct comparison with earlier contexts characterised by mere rumours and printed fake news (Lima 2021). Unique features of present-day disinformation include the ease of information dissemination on networks, the widespread use of social media, user anonymity, and distancing, polarisation in the public sphere, and the prevalence of datafication, contributing to its distinct nature (Alves and Maciel 2020). The economic dimension of fake news is also substantial, with viral content generating monetary gains through advertising for website owners and platforms (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017). The current societal stage, marked by mediatisation and platformisation, sets the contemporary phenomenon apart from its historical counterparts.

The issue of disinformation gained increased attention in 2016, driven by two significant events: Trump's election in the United States and the Brexit referendum symbolising the UK's departure from the European Union. These political episodes were heavily influenced by the circulation of fake news on digital social media platforms, sparking heightened interest in the subject among researchers and the general public. In 2017, "fake news" was chosen as the word of the year by Collins Publishers, following the previous year's selection of "post-truth," a term describing the interpretation of reality to align with personal convictions. Notably, both terms gained prominence during the Trump presidential campaign and later spread to other contexts.

[2] A detailed account of historical examples of rumors can be found in Quessada's dissertation (2022).

Beyond the dissemination of disinformation, the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign witnessed the prevalence of memes and posts featuring racism, xenophobia, and sexism. The then-Republican candidate, Donald Trump, became a focal point for hate speech, both online and offline (Eddington 2018). According to Eddington (2018), the campaign's slogan, "Make America Great Again," provided a communicational space for online hate groups, particularly far-right supremacists, who mobilised by sharing content on various platforms using the respective hashtags.

The international debate was significantly heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, the proliferation of disinformation became so alarming that the World Health Organisation declared it an "infodemic" (WHO 2020), where false information spread as rapidly and uncontrollably as the virus itself, posing considerable destructive potential. The spread of disinformation in situations like a pandemic is exacerbated by the strong emotional involvement of users grappling with the imminent reality of death in their daily lives, often leading to desperate actions (Silveira et al. 2020).

In both Brazil and other countries, the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic were characterised by the intense circulation of disinformation on various platforms, with a particular emphasis on WhatsApp. The platform's characteristics have made it a critically important means for Brazilians to obtain information (and disinformation) over the years, solidifying itself as the most widely used platform in the country. The platform allows each user to directly share their testimonies and experiences with their respective circles of friends, colleagues, and family. Family WhatsApp groups establish interactional logic constituted by affectionate relationships, in addition to the dynamics of the platform's operation itself, causing much of the disinformation circulating through these channels to be imbued with bonds of sociability (Dalmolin, Kroth, and Borelli 2022), exponentially increasing its dissemination potential.

In Brazil, during the pandemic, disinformation reached the level of government policy (Calil 2021; Dalmolin 2023). While the World Health Organisation recommended social isolation and the adoption of preventive measures, the government of Jair Bolsonaro sought to downplay the importance and risks of COVID-19, adopting a polarised discourse against political opponents aligned with international health recommendations. The pandemic reality in the country was marked by underreporting of cases due to the limited availability of COVID-19 tests for the population, especially in the early stages of the pandemic. There were also controversies related to the disclosure of official data on contagion by the Ministry of Health, prompting the formation of a consortium among the country's journalistic outlets to disseminate basic information, such as the count of deaths in the country (Lopes and Queiroz 2020).

In early 2021, the government communication persisted in promoting campaigns advocating "early treatment" instead of prioritising vaccination efforts, even as vaccination emerged as the most effective means to combat the coronavirus. The Brazilian Ministry of Health enlisted digital influencers to disseminate disinformation, leading many followers to believe in the efficacy of ineffective drugs like hydroxychloroquine (Santos and Dalmolin 2023).

Former President Jair Bolsonaro's actions during the pandemic further reinforced a denialist discourse expressed by him and his followers on social media. Images of Bolsonaro in public places, defying social distancing measures, became commonplace at a time when such measures were advocated as crucial to combat COVID-19 (Dalmolin 2023). The promotion of the "herd immunity" hypothesis contributed to widespread contamination through the dissemination of false information, particularly in March and April 2020 (Calil 2021).

A study by Ajzenman, Cavalcanti, and da Mata (2021) linked Bolsonaro's denialist statements during the pandemic to increased population mobility, analysing the intersection of electoral data, credit card expenditures, and geolocated information from cell phones. These results aligned with Calvillo et al.'s (2020) perception that conservatives were more susceptible to disinformation about the pandemic, displaying lower accuracy in distinguishing between false and true news about the disease.

Disinformation and hate speech during the pandemic also contributed to the growth of racism and xenophobia in various contexts, particularly targeting Asians due to the virus's origin in China. In the United States, NGO data indicated that, within the first three months of the pandemic, there were 2120 recorded incidents against Asian Americans, encompassing physical and verbal assaults, workplace discrimination, and virtual harassment (Kaplan 2023).

A significant portion of these prejudiced narratives was fueled by populist discourse, especially in the United States by President Donald Trump and in Brazil by his follower Jair Bolsonaro. In Brazil, some representatives of the Brazilian government shared Sinophobic sensationalist content on their official social media platforms, leading to diplomatic tension with China. The Chinese ambassador in Brasília demanded retractions for derogatory and defamatory posts made by Bolsonaro's son, Eduardo Bolsonaro, and the then Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub (Silva 2022).

The conducive environment for the spread of disinformation and hateful discourse has been on the rise in the country, especially in recent electoral processes. The impact of disinformation in the 2018 elections prompted several initiatives in the National Congress to combat the practice (Rodrigues, Bonone,

and Mielli 2021). Bolsonaro's election in 2018 was marked by the dissemination of fake news, including the infamous "gay kit"[3], surrounded by statements considered conservative and intolerant towards "leftists," "communists," and "human rights advocates" (Dalmolin and Frigo 2020). Disinformation networks strengthened during the four years of the government, culminating in intensified efforts during the 2022 electoral campaign and the subsequent attack on democracy on 8 January 2023.

During the electoral period, while polls indicated Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as the favourite, President Bolsonaro cast doubt on the security of electronic voting machines. Fueled by antidemocratic information circulating in the Bolsonaro media sphere, activists organised protests and camps for months, demanding "military intervention" and later marching to Brasília to forcibly take over the federal government. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the events on 8th January 2023, were not spontaneous protests but a terrorist act orchestrated in recent years through speeches, videos, and organised mobilisations disseminated within Bolsonaro's bubbles, resulting in more than a thousand detentions in Brasília. The organisation of the 8th January events itself attests to the existence and organised action of these hate and disinformation networks, without which the mobilisation for the event would not have been possible.

Rethinking Concepts

Defining disinformation presents a challenge as its characterisation varies depending on the context in which the phenomena occur. Both academic literature and the field of journalism lack a widely accepted definition (Ortellado and Ribeiro 2018). Another issue arises from the fact that many concepts developed around the phenomenon of disinformation are intertwined with value judgments, making their epistemological precision difficult.

Several authors use the term "fake news" to refer to the contemporary phenomenon of the spread of false information in the context of social media, among a spectrum of definitions (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017; Alves and Maciel 2020; Gray, Bounegru, and Venturini 2020; Keener 2018; Larsson 2020). Various definitions exist, but they all share the common sense that they consist of distorted signals that do not correspond to the truth (Allcott and Gentzkow 2017).

However, several authors emphasise that "fake news" does not seem to be an appropriate terminology because the term has become popular to indicate con-

[3] The term "gay kit" refers to a set of false information that circulated during the 2018 presidential campaign in Brazil, accusing the former government led by Lula of distributing educational materials in schools that allegedly encouraged homosexual practices in children.

fusion and misunderstandings in the dissemination of information (Bennett and Livingston 2018; Ribeiro and Ortellado 2018). In addition to supposedly journalistic texts, the authors include simulated documentary formats among the genres in which information appears, adding political motives as the driving force behind this intentionality. Other authors also refer to different terminologies to define the phenomenon, such as "junk news" (Gray, Bounegru, and Venturini 2020) and "alternative facts" (Keener 2018), a rhetorical term that describes false narratives produced by the American far right.

The classic distinction made by Wardle and Derakhshan (2019) between disinformation, misinformation, and malinformation complicates the term, advancing towards a distinction within the scope of "informational disorder." According to the authors, misinformation refers to false information that people believe to be true but is disseminated without the intention to misinform; disinformation would be deliberately false information created to cause harm to an individual or group, while malinformation consists of true information used to harm someone (Wardle and Derakhshan 2019). The authors also present a subclassification that considers the agents involved, the message, the interpreter, and the stages of disinformation.

One problem with this conceptualisation is that its terminological distinction is based on defining the motivations and intentions of those who disseminated the information, which is challenging to specify in some contexts. The contemporary phenomenon of disinformation goes beyond simply verifying whether the information is true or false or attributing it to the malice of social actors to deceive the public (Ortellado and Ribeiro 2018). The spread of false information is "an action engaged in a war, information that is consumed, produced, and shared due to the function it plays in the battle, corroborating a certain narrative or weakening the enemy's narrative (Alves and Maciel 2020: 153)." Therefore, it is a phenomenon that can only be understood within the process of circulation. It becomes impossible to separate disinformation from its strategic nature in its particular contexts, complicating its apprehension by methodologies that disregard its enunciation circumstances.

As a rule, fake news finds its engine not in the desire to deny the truth, but rather in the will to win the dispute at any cost, even if it requires distorting reality. People cease to question whether the news is true or false. They are even less concerned about whether the facts are well-founded or if the source is reliable. The only thing that matters is whether the news favours its position in a polarised context. Thus, we produce and circulate information in an entrenched manner, using news and headlines as weapons amid a battlefield (Alves and Maciel 2020: 153. Author's translation)

Given this complexity, strategies to combat disinformation extend beyond the mere dissemination of truth and the circulation of debunking, as pursued by fact-checking agencies. While these efforts are undoubtedly valuable tools, their impact is constrained because the accurate and diligently researched information they provide circulates within social networks that are distinct from those processing false and biased information. Disarming disinformation is not solely about presenting the facts but entails unravelling its ideological utility and fostering reactive responses to perceived threats (Keener 2018: 148).

Considering that affective and emotional motivations contribute to the dissemination of false information by users (Bakir and McStay 2018), the legitimisation of disinformation often relies on relationships of authority or the promotion of self-silencing among participants. Additionally, the likelihood of individuals believing fraudulent information significantly increases when such information is consistently and excessively present (Wardle 2017), as observed in Brazil during both the pandemic infodemic and electoral campaigns.

Another crucial aspect to emphasise is that disseminators of disinformation encompass both real and virtual personalities. Real personalities include digital influencers, political and cultural figures, as well as ordinary people. Virtual personalities are characterised by fake profiles, often operated by bots, engaging in mass publications and releases. To describe these communicators, Carlón (2020) prefers terms such as "unspecified" or "anonymous" because, despite being surrounded by machinic processes, they are social communicators who either assume an alternate identity or simply choose not to reveal themselves. According to the author, "los enunciadores sociales y bots forman parte de un mismo sistema debido a que se definen teóricamente por la misma distinción: si son seres vivientes o no" (Carlón 2020: 126).

In this context, the concept of "extreme speech" put forth by Udupa, Gagliardone, and Hervik (2021) seems to advance beyond the binary distinctions of true or false, intentional or unintentional, and informative or disinformative. The authors propose a concept to characterise speech with antidemocratic potential circulating within the informational bubbles of the far right, considering it a cultural practice, a social phenomenon, and a technopolitical manifestation (Udupa, Gagliardone, and Hervik 2021). Since a significant portion of the content circulating in extremist social media involves disinformation, the concept of extreme speech, rather than focusing solely on characterising information as true or false or determining the intentionality of its authors, appears to provide a broader perspective that includes the strategic and political dimensions necessary for understanding the content within these bubbles.

Another intriguing approach is to examine the political-media structure that facilitates the circulation of disinformation, such as the concept of the extremist mediasphere, exemplified by the Bolsonaro mediasphere in Brazil (Rocha 2021; 2023), or hyperpartisan media (Ortellado and Ribeiro 2018; Larsson 2020). These perspectives shift the focus to the structured processes of disinformative content production and polarised narratives that mobilise communication bubbles of parallel reality and political militancy.

Final Considerations

The recent experiences within the COVID-19 pandemic, which amplified ongoing political processes in contemporary politics, highlight the need for a thoughtful examination of the concept of disinformation. As evident in Brazil, the informational infodemic extends beyond the pandemic context, manifesting as a phenomenon in Brazilian politics, notably during the last two presidential elections and culminating in the coordination of an attempted anti-democratic coup on 8 January 2023.

In the Global South context, platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and others are identified as "life technologies" (Gómez Cruz & Harindranath 2020), intricately woven into all aspects of social life. It is essential to link this theoretical reflection with additional perspectives, broadening the epistemological focus to encompass issues akin to the Brazilian context, rooted in underdevelopment, intensive technology use, low levels of formal education, and media literacy.

Advancing the conceptual definition becomes paramount for developing a perspective on the contemporary challenge of platform-driven hatred, a scenario shaped by the global surge of extremism, particularly right-wing extremism, utilising platforms extensively for disseminating anti-democratic content. Reconsidering this situation in the context of the Global South, accounting for the type of platform usage is crucial. Examining the phenomenon of disinformation circulation on platforms in Brazil is enriched when viewed through the perspective of extreme discourse and the extremist media sphere, taking into account its unique constitution.

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The Mediatisation of Violence in Brazil: Drifts of War And Securitisation

Ada C. Machado da Silveira[1]

Introduction[2]

After months of his third inauguration as President of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva reiterated once again the statement he initially made in 2002: "I won't forget when Busch called me to talk. He wanted to wage war against Iraq and I replied: my war is against hunger" (@LulaOficial 2023). A few months later, a statement by President Volodymyr Zelensky invoking Brazil's status as a "peaceful country" caught the attention of Brazilians.[3] If it is true that Brazil can enjoy soft power for this purpose (Lima 2010: 415), the statement contrasts with its domestic scope. In doing so, the Ukrainian president exposed a divergence in understanding violence.

Regarding territorial disputes with neighbours, Brazil stands out as one of the few national states globally that has refrained from engaging in such conflicts for over 150 years, maintaining a consistent diplomatic approach during this period.[4] According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP 2023), the last recorded participation of Brazilian troops in a conflict was alongside the

[1] Professor of Communication Sciences at Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil, and a researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), Brazil. She was a senior visiting researcher and guest professor at Södertörn University, Sweden, 2022–2023. The text documents aspects of the research activities during my tenure as a Senior Visiting Researcher in the CAPES-STINT Program No. 0862/2020, Process No. 88881.465493/2019–0, at the Department of *Media and Communication, Södertörn University*, Sweden. This period spanned from August 2022 to May 2023, as part of an agreement between the Brazilian agency and the Swedish agency.

[2] The text also highlights the outcomes of the research project related to Process No. 312666/2020–9, from the CNPq Call No. 09/2020 – PQ Scholarship, carried out between 2021 and 2023.

[3] The interview given to the CNN Brasil channel, urging Brazilian President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva to act in support of Ukraine, took place in Kyiv on 6th August 2023. This opportunity was facilitated through the intervention of Brazilian Chancellor Celso Amorim, with a view to diplomatic negotiations for the resolution of the conflict.

[4] The War of the Triple Alliance, or the Paraguayan War (1864–1870), marked the final territorial dispute in which Brazil became involved. It resulted from its collaboration with the military forces of Argentina and Uruguay against Paraguay, culminating in the defeat and devastation of the latter.

Allies in World War II, a battle fought on European soil. In the current century, Brazil has re-emerged on the international stage through collaboration in UN peacekeeping missions.

The Global Peace Index 2023 report (2023: 9, 10, 90) positions Brazil at 132nd place, while Ukraine, ranking 157th, is marked by a conflict considered the primary contributor to the overall index increase. Additionally, Ukraine bears the highest economic cost of violence, whereas Brazil secures the 29th spot out of 163 positions in the ranking.

Therefore, the statement by the Ukrainian president encapsulates two conflicting perspectives. On one hand, there is a portrayal of Brazil without external enemies, concealing domestic conflicts that disproportionately affect women, the impoverished, Black youth, homosexuals, transsexuals, as well as rural workers and indigenous people. This backdrop competes daily with news coverage of the most severe global conflicts.[5]

The text comprises six sections. In the initial part, my objective is to incorporate elements shedding light on the role of mediatisation in its fourth wave of datafication. In the subsequent two sections, I elaborate on the datafication of violence in Brazil and provide concise observations about Ukraine. This is crucial as the mediatisation of conflicts offers connecting elements between the two nations. In the fifth and sixth sections, I aim to reinforce the significance of the two agencies mentioned – the war and security agencies. Finally, I outline considerations regarding the implications arising from the decision to either militarise or securitise domestic conflicts in Brazil and the mediatising impact of datafication.

Mediatisation and Datafication of Conflicts

The understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of violence, as derived from analyses produced by social fields seeking to structure their perception of violence, conceptualises it as a process constructed through mediatisation. The epistemic power of this understanding emanates from organisational initiatives, particularly the use of yearbooks, bulletins, and analyses from observatories and institutes dedicated to systematising and disseminating access to violence indicators, commonly referred to as "Think Tanks." I interpret these efforts as a specific appropriation of mediatisation, also incorporating certain elements inherent to media logic, such as journalistic coverage.

[5] The Ukrainian population, roughly speaking, corresponds to about 1/5 of the Brazilian population, while the Brazilian territory is 13 times larger than the Ukrainian territory.

The communicational aspect of the mediatisation of violence, including conflicts and public security, does not necessarily align with the logic employed by media organisations. Due to limitations in delving into the concept of mediatisation, I intend to highlight the non-coincidence between the mentioned logic and the interference (or coercive capacity) of war and securitisation agencies in addressing the mediatisation of domestic conflicts in Brazil.

In this theoretical chapter, mediatisation is conceptualised as a broader approach than that corresponding solely to the logic of media organisations (Braga 2015). Mediatisation encompasses the expanded circulation of information and the diversification of interactions it fosters. Socio-technical environments provide spaces that are no longer confined to reception but enable active participation. Mixed circuits are not necessarily dependent on the media field alone; they can involve the intersection of social fields and the intermediation of agencies, as illustrated in the following diagram:

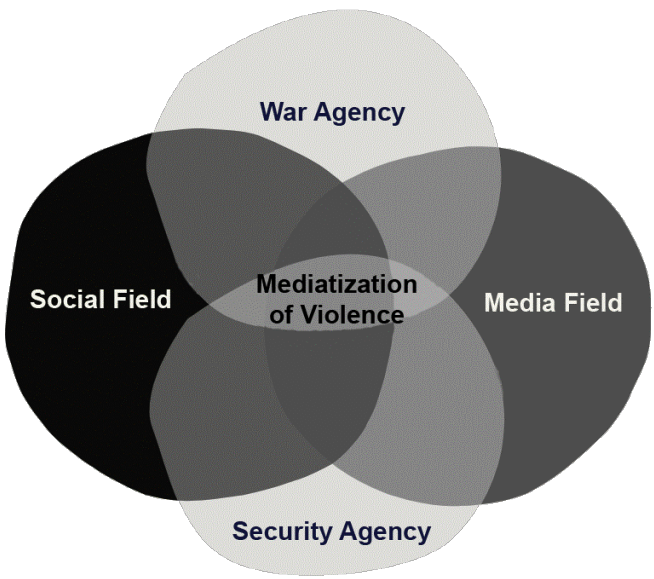

Figure 1 – Diagram of the mediatisation of Violence. Source: Author, based on Braga (2015).

The justification for framing the mediatisation of violence within the contexts established by war and securitisation agencies lies in its potential to facilitate a more profound, critical, and non-Westernised analysis of conflicts, as outlined by Barranqueiro (2020). This approach also acknowledges the emergence of a multipolar world, where Brazil, alongside Russia, is a founding member of the group now known as BRICS+.

Addressing the challenges in this theme, it is crucial to recognise that the mediatisation of violence extends beyond datafication when viewed merely as a compilation of violence indicator records. However, I contend that datafication aligns with a fourth wave of mediatisation, stemming from the influential forces set in motion by the preceding wave of digitisation (Couldry and Hepp 2020). This phase incorporates mechanisms such as search engines, algorithmic processes, and databases that translate human actions into interpretable data. This amalgamation of processes is termed Data Mining. However, it does not explicitly highlight the communicative nature presupposed in the fourth wave of mediatisation.

The mediatisation of violence involves the integration of the logic of social fields, such as police stations, health departments, and other public security agents, with the field of media and its technologies. The logics applied in this context select procedures based on databases that operationalise records of violence. datafication, achieved through digital production, storage, and processing, permeates various social fields, introducing biases from the normative system that generated their indicators (van Dijck 2017). Its alignment with the media field lends social legitimacy to datafication operators, allowing them to influence public opinion and advocate for public security policies.

Examining these circuits, Göran Bolin (2022: 174, 177) draws attention to the interplay of technological, social, economic, and epistemological values constituting data capitalism. The epistemological dynamics present therein have been a central component in the development of new control techniques since the 2nd Industrial Revolution.

In the context of its application to the study of the datafication of violence in Brazil, the production of statistics facilitates strategies of social control in a society where police lethality is systematically denounced (Waiselfisz 2016). However, it remains essential to evaluate the normative implications and potential ethical conflicts that data mining and the processing of personal data may imply in the medium and long term (Couldry and Yu 2018).

This epistemological dimension prompts considerations similar to those of anthropologist Alba Zaluar (1999: 6) regarding the dispersion of the debate on violence and crime in Brazil. Zaluar emphasises that the perception of limits and disturbance, as well as the suffering it causes, varies culturally and historically. The author notes media concerns with manifestations of violence as recurring in Brazilian news since the 1980s, generating a sense of insecurity that doesn't always align with reality.

A recent analysis by researchers from São Paulo addresses the persistence of violence in Brazilian life (Adorno et al. 2022). It highlights the crisis of mainstream media in the face of social media, expressing concern that exaggerated

violence coverage may influence elites in a manner suitable to mediatisation but not necessarily coinciding with the non-mediatised aspects of social life.

The decomposition of social life found in capturing and ordering information about violence seeks to be overcome through formats associated with the term "Think Tanks." These entities are mentioned here as contributing to the datafied recomposition. Hence, the text aims to embrace the various dimensions of Brazilian domestic conflicts that construct mediatised interactional spaces that are not solely dependent on media organisations but recognise their significance in public debate. Consequently, the activity of Think Tanks in their dissemination through media, public policies, government, and society is understood in this text as a mediatising action.

The Datafication of Brazilian Domestic Conflicts

The dimensions of violence and public security encompass a range of potentially contentious issues. Here, I provide a synthesis of initiatives aimed at systematising records to support public deliberation, with a specific focus on symbolic violence. The emphasis is on the datafication of facts, considering the social representations, images, and narratives characteristic of it as part of the media field.

Firstly, data from the Uppsala University-produced encyclopedia in the UCDP database (2023) highlight a significant increase in deaths in Brazil since 1993. The numbers surged from less than a hundred people per year to over two thousand deaths in 2017, a figure sustained in subsequent years.

The Conflict Barometer 2021, published by the University of Heidelberg (HIIK 2022), notes that internal conflicts in Brazil are mainly driven by organised crime (particularly in states like Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, São Paulo, Pernambuco, and Rio Grande do Norte) and territorial disputes and natural resource conflicts (Amazonas and Pará). Violence is characterised by conflicts (war) between drug trafficking groups, intensifying in 2008.

The publication assesses that the number of conflicts between major drug trafficking organisations decreased from one to zero in 2021 (HIIK 20221: 16). Thus, clashes between drug trafficking organisations, militias, and the government de-escalated to a subnational-level "limited war." The favelas of Rio de Janeiro and Manaus in the state of Amazonas remained focal points of violence and police operations. Various drug trafficking organisations and militias, in-

cluding Comando Vermelho (CV) and Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), operate across multiple states.[6]

Another dimension of violence arises from tensions between indigenous peoples and the Brazilian government due to the weak preservation of demarcated or yet-to-be-demarcated territories. This situation exposes various agents' greed, leading to deforestation, logging, and mining, processes recorded since 1985. The COVID-19 pandemic particularly affected indigenous ethnicities, such as the Yanomami in the state of Roraima, intensifying during the government of Jair Bolsonaro (2019–2022). Conflicts with social movements of landless (MST) and homeless (MTST) workers have been recorded since 1996, and social and ideological demonstrations in Brazilian metropolises intensified in 2014 (HIIK 2022: 109), although their outbreak occurred during the so-called June 2013 protests.

While the categories worked on by Swedish and German universities illustrate the multiple dimensions of domestic violence, the blog of the Security Observatories Network (2023) goes beyond these aspects. It systematises analyses from eight Observatories, focusing on values related to the exposure of children and adolescents, young Black individuals, and women. Research on domestic and family violence against women from 2005 to 2021 reveals a significant increase in reports of suffering due to violence (physical, psychological, moral, sexual, and patrimonial). The publications aim to illuminate the macho process that continues to victimise women through assaults, femicides, trans femicides, and lesbocides (Ramos, 2021).

The challenges in data mining and indicator production highlight a lack of transparency on the subject. The imperative to enhance the quality of data collection is the concluding message of a study by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), in collaboration with other institutions, focusing on the agenda of violence and public security in Brazil (Ferreira and Soares, 2021). The study unveils several key findings:

1. More than half of the Brazilian population fears violence.
2. Homicides are territorially and situationally concentrated. In a global comparison, Latin America and Brazil have exhibited increasing rates since 1980, with uninterrupted growth since 2007. A still not fully understood phenomenon is the decrease in homicide rates in Brazil from 2018.

[6] The UCDP (2023) provides a record of 27 criminal organisations, which it attributes to non-state and unilateral categories of organised violence.

3. There is an over-mortality of young, Black, and low-education men, who are the primary victims of homicides.
4. The victimisation of women and LGBTQI+ individuals is gender-related and structural.
5. Clashes and truces between prison factions significantly impact violence levels.

Police lethality, for example, stands out as a significant element in the debate. The Yearbook of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (2023: 14) documented a total of 6,429 deaths resulting from police intervention, highlighting an average of 17 victims per day in 2022.

The Datafication of the Russia–Ukraine Conflict

Although the Ukrainian president acknowledges Brazil's contribution to reshaping the global order, analyses systematised by various think tanks indicate that the international image of a "peaceful country" is a fallacy. However, their records do not allow for a direct comparison between the Brazilian and Ukrainian realities, as the comparative study of the conflicts in which both are involved is diverse.

Ukraine faces a regular war, meaning its armies mobilise armed soldiers, tanks, aircraft, drones, and bombs whose actions are reported in battles, institutionalising the conflict and reifying the war. From a media perspective, the military operation launched on 24 February 2022, operationalised moulding forces (Hepp 2014) that guide our understanding of violence, authorising the intervention of discursive mediators who assert the existence of a war.

The Conflict Barometer 2021 records the increase in the conflict with Russia since 2003, characterised as a territorial, international power, and resource dispute. The Russian military operation on Ukrainian territory started in 2022 and is established alongside other conflicts, such as the dispute over Crimea's autonomy, originating in 1988, or Donbas since 2014. Non-violent conflicts over Ukrainian national power that started in 2013 have progressively escalated, pitting right-wing groups against civil rights groups, as well as minorities and opposition parties against the government. Government actions censoring news activity and closing media outlets are also documented in this context (HIIK 2022: 43, 55, 56).

In terms of datafication, Ukraine's condition after 500 days of armed conflict had 9,000 civilian deaths (UN News 2023). From a general perspective, the Norwegian army estimated 300,000 deaths in the first 11 months of the war, including Ukrainian and Russian soldiers and civilians (Exame 2023). The UCDP

(2023) estimates that the 90,993 deaths in 2021 originated from state-based violence, as well as unilateral and non-state violence. It also notes that 100 to 190 thousand troops were stationed by Russia on the Ukraine border by the end of that year.

These' figures provide a comparison with Brazilian statistics. Between 1980 and 2014, the Violence Map recorded 967,851 firearm-related fatalities in Brazil, with 85.8 percent characterised as homicides: "The magnitudes are so absurd and surreal that it becomes difficult to understand their significance, escaping our understanding and experience" (Weiselfisz 2016: 16, 67, 69). In 2014, there were 44,861 deaths, which "represent 123 firearm victims every day of the year, five deaths every hour" (Weiselfisz 2016: 70).[7] Another initiative, the Violence Atlas, estimated 45,503 deaths in 2019, of which 30,825 occurred by firearm (IPEA 2023).

It's worth noting that economically, the arms industry gained prominence in the Jair Bolsonaro government with the deregulation of the purchase and use of firearms by civilians. This moment coincided with the international rise as an emerging supplier (Béraud-Sudreau et al. 2020: 5).

The juxtaposition of the conflicting realities of Brazil and Ukraine exposes diversified datafication due to reasons inherent to each nation's history and circumstances, although the theoretical treatment may be common. Next, I will explain how the mediatisation of violence in Brazil can derive from the privilege given to the prism of war.

The Agency of War

In this section, various designations vying for academic attention in social conflicts also begin to encompass the dimension of symbolic violence and its effects, such as disinformation and hate speech, attributed to the far-right's appropriation of Gramscian cultural war.

Critics argue that the use of the term "war" instead of "conflict" supports the maintenance of the Armed Forces in a scenario that, strictly speaking, does not require the mobilisation of military personnel. It would also grant legitimacy to the operative and broad use of the notion to target the civilian population by

[7] On this point, the author analyses: "Brazil, without religious or ethnic conflicts, based on colour or race, without territorial disputes or border issues, without civil war or political confrontations, manages the feat of victimising more citizens through firearm violence than many contemporary armed conflicts, such as the Chechen War, the Gulf War, the various intifadas, the Colombian guerrillas, or the liberation wars of Angola and Mozambique, or even a long series of armed conflicts that have occurred already in this century and which we had the opportunity to present in previous maps" (Weiselfisz 2016: 70).

both agents of the Armed Forces and state Military Police, as well as private militias. This sets the stage for the emergence of expressions like informational war (iWar), a concept explored in the fields of International Relations, Public Security, and Defense.[8] Legal perspectives also come into play, such as Lawfare, or legal warfare, as seen in Operation Car Wash (Carvalho and Fonseca 2019).

Hoskins and O'Loughlin's (2015) perspective is characterised as *arrested war*, the third phase of the mediatisation periodised after *broadcast war* and *diffused war*. They conceptualise these phases as paradigms coinciding with discrete phases of mediatisation, mobilising notions of media ecology, the exercise of power, and its distribution by elites. The *arrested war* phase was proposed, especially based on events in Ukraine, introducing a certain control over diffusion and chaos in mainstream media pointed out in the previous phases. Later, Hoskins and Shchelin (2023) would advance on the theme, expressing concerns about the ineffectiveness of policies to stop the harmful actions of social media networks that increased precisely with the Russia–Ukraine conflict.

Establishing concepts to empirically study Brazilian reality requires consideration of various trends. The notion of hybrid warfare, conceived as a military strategy without disregarding diplomatic actions, seeks to impact institutionalised political activity, even foreseeing external electoral intervention and using methods devised in conventional or irregular warfare. Initially restricted to the military sphere, the concept of hybrid warfare gained political discourse prominence, spreading in the United States, Russia, and Brazil, particularly after the Crimea annexation in 2014. In this sense, it's essential to recall that Dourado, Leite, and Nobre (2020) point out that some conceptual confusion was already present in the genesis of the hybrid warfare notion.

An antecedent of this process comes from news coverage of the so-called "Pacification Forces" during the Guarantee of Law and Order (GLO) operation in 2010 in the favelas of Vila Cruzeiro and Complexo do Alemão, Rio de Janeiro. The coverage awarded the Globo Television Network's Journalism Nucleus the International Emmy Award in the United States. The operation inaugurated a series of activities to promote a secure city image in preparation for hosting the FIFA World Cup (2014) and the Olympic Games (2016). These experiences leveraged the Rio Operations Center (COR), which monitors urban areas and utilises collaborative communication (Batista et al., 2018).

[8] An extended understanding of iWar is based on five socio-technical dimensions of war: "individuation, implicitness, interactivity, intimacy, and immediacy" (Pötzsch, 2015, p.83). The author also discusses the concepts of virtuous war, linked to cultural and political aspects, and diffused war, related to legal-political aspects.

Another example of war agency as a media logic is the news coverage preceding the GLO operation during Carnival in February 2018 in Rio de Janeiro. It was carried out at the request of the governor of the state, Luiz Fernando Pezão, who addressed then-President Michel Temer. The extensive coverage by Globo Television Network, particularly in its highest-rated news program, along with replications in other Globo-owned programs, showed the deep intertwining between a media group and federal, state, and municipal governments. This coverage is widely regarded as promoting Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy (Schneider 2023: 193).

GLO-related news coverage, totalling 36 operations between 2010 and 2016, is extensively justified to counter waves of violence and criminal activities (Passos 2019: 210). The underlying concept of practices emphasising repressive measures as justifications for maintaining public order and ensuring an authoritarian security program is deserving of criticism. It is a scenario where media communication activity is central to portraying different processes as part of the same purpose, contributing to the prevalence of war agencies.

The allegory of a semiotic bomb, disseminated by the Cinegnose collective in São Paulo, explores the communicative power of certain images and other phenomena of political intervention (Ferreira 2020). Bombings and street disturbances became frequent after June 2013 (HIIK 2022; Almeida 2020). Some analyses align them with the Arab Spring, and Cinegnose interprets them as semiotic bombs due to the volume of meanings they release.

In such a context, professional strategic communication affects ontological security (Bolton 2021). It is present in the efforts of the Brazilian far-right, which, in line with its transnational allies, has used social media platforms to produce effects that historian João César de Castro Rocha (2021) calls cognitive dissonance. He understands that its promotion consists of establishing its mediasphere and an operational and psychological instance of a parallel reality laboratory.

On the other hand, it is essential to remember that the strategic condition of circulating propaganda materials across various current social media has precedents. Comparing extensive documentation of propaganda activities by organisations such as IPES/IBAD (which today might be called media) in the period preceding the military coup in Brazil in the 1960s allowed an understanding of the will to power established there (Silveira 2015). The precedence of that experience and its memory may be at the root of the adherence of many Brazilian intellectuals to the war agency. I perceive that Dreyfuss's (2015) Gramscian approach provides an understanding of the (dis)continuities of mediatisation processes that certain authors comprehend as war. It's a scenario where communicational activity is central to articulating different and dramatic

processes, contributing to the prevalence of the "hybrid war" emblem (Korybko 2018). It encompasses a set of notions that have been mobilised in favour of the mediatised dimension of social life

The anthropologist Piero Leirner (2020) interprets the military's involvement with civilian populations in Brazil through psychological operations aimed at influencing the opinions and behaviour of groups and individuals. The author believes that such strategies, integral to hybrid warfare, encouraged millions of Brazilians to become involuntary combatants in a conflict driven by political polarisation, with threatening consequences for democracy. Psychological operations within military training gain prominence with the term OPsInf, or Psycho Informative Operations, considered relevant in hybrid warfare. The most prominent form in this situation is media OPsInf, "conducted by experts in psychological warfare infiltrated into civil society" (Costa 2018: 31). These ideas are affiliated with the exposition of Chinese military figures Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui (1999), who anticipate the intensification of media activity in unlimited warfare. However, they refer to the conflict surrounding the cultural assimilation of Western powers over Asian countries.

The Securitisation Agency

The adoption of public security policies based on operations by the Armed Forces against fellow citizens in civilian life has ignited extensive debate. Its repeated use in actions against civil society originated in Brazil with the end of the military-civilian-business dictatorship in 1985, after 21 years in the federal government. The military's involvement in combating drug trafficking results from a combination of counterinsurgency doctrine with new military doctrines for peacekeeping missions carried out abroad. Brazil's participation in the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti – Minustah (2004–2017), among others, led to the formation of a legion of veterans whose activities in national society deserve criticism, as their replication violates the limits imposed on the use of violence in the domestic space (Passos 2019). These elements have the potential to question the significant asset of Brazilian Soft Power in international diplomacy.

The indicated context reinforces the reception of the Copenhagen School in the securitisation studies of Brazil and takes it as a socially constructed concept, distinct from the traditional realist perspective. Securitisation processes penetrate their eminently discursive and political condition and require convincing the audience of the relevance of extraordinary measures (Buzan et al. 1998). Thus, the focus on the audience becomes recurrent in the securitisation agency

(Viana e Silva and Pereira 2019), which demands attention, as the primacy of the audience reifies both the enunciative and circulation instances.

In terms of the securitisation approach, it is the State's responsibility to transform certain issues into security matters/agendas, considering the potential impact on public opinion. For the production of measures against an action "socially recognised as a threat to security," it is "essential that there are intersubjectively shared meanings among those responsible for formulating and implementing its agenda" (Tanno 2003: 57–58). In this context, the securitising role of institutionalised actors within the Brazilian state (police, brigades, armed forces), as well as those from organised crime in the so-called parallel state (armed militias, paramilitaries, drug traffickers, arms and illicit substances traffickers, perpetrators of customs crimes such as smuggling and contraband), appears in a non-media condition.

The focus on the audience would emphasise the importance of mediatisation as a disseminating, aggregating, and socially legitimating force. In International Relations, securitisation refers to the process of converting certain issues into security matters by state actors. In Economics, securitisation refers to the action of providing financial backing for certain operations. In Law, securitisation conceives journalism as one of several expert systems that, enjoying credibility, qualifies to provide information produced by others (Miguel 1999).

The datafication of police lethality has led to the emergence of editorials calling for the implementation of a public security policy that ensures the rights of citizenship in the face of the number of deaths and, especially, the involvement of the police in citizen deaths. The mediatisation of the national debate stemming from the security route is an option advocated by human rights defenders, aiming to secure fundamental rights, including the universal right to life. I believe the significant aspect of the highlighted discussion lies in the criticism it makes when emphasising the blending of military-police tasks in social life with the promise of civilian protection. It is crucial to recall that the mediatisation of this promise through news coverage of GLO operations legitimised the escalation of the Armed Forces to political governance in Brazil in 2018.

Final Remarks

Examining the mediatisation of violence in Brazil as a product of negotiations between the war agency and the security agency brings about implications for the communicability of its processes. Both agencies represent variations with supporters situated in both social and media fields, and their reflexivity in objects resulting from numerous interplays needs to be evaluated. The communicational question that arises necessitates attention to the non-coincidence

between the logic of the fields. This led me to highlight aspects of the mediatisation of violence when negotiated by the mentioned agencies.

The divergences of one agency or another resonate in the analysis of the mediatisation of violence; their clash impacts the understanding that Brazilian society has of its existential threats and also influences the narratives elaborated from them. The epistemic dimension of mediatisation adds to the difficulties of framing the issue of public security: "It is less about a theoretical concept and more about an empirical and organisational field that structures institutions and social relations around the way the State manages order and social conflicts" (Costa and Lima 2014: 482, cited in Lima et al. 2015: 123). This perspective focuses on both the mediatising action of social fields and that undertaken by the media field.

As noted at the beginning of this text, Brazil maintains the ambivalence of presenting itself as a peaceful country on the international stage while experiencing internal conflict. The mediatisation of violence promoted by Think Tanks affects social subjectivity by influencing the production of assessments, issuance of judgments, identification of culprits, or framing of liabilities. When it reinforces the perception of unresolved colonial conditions exacerbated by globalised barbarism, it is necessary to assess the consequences of the conditioning of freedom and/or authority engendered by mediatisation.

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Operations of a Mediatised War: From "Body-Images" in Circulation to Boards in the Abyss

Ana Paula da Rosa[1]

Introduction

This research aims to explore the process of image circulation to comprehend the role they play in shaping meanings related to the conflicts between Ukraine and Russia. It considers the mediatisation logics that permeate and configure these images. Therefore, our starting point involves: a) changes in the conditions of circulation and circularity of discourses about war, facilitated by web access, and b) the complexities of the communicational process itself based on flowing images and their operations. To grasp how operations of meaning and visibility unfold, this article analyses a collection of audiovisual materials (photographs, videos, and posts) addressing both the routine of war (the front) and the effects of war (bodies, devastation). These materials were extensively disseminated through digital media devices, journalism outlets, and social actors worldwide, including in the UK.

This text aims to scrutinise the actions of these images as operations of meaning. What conflict emerges from the body-image relationship, and to what extent is war shaped by strategies of making visible and erasing? As an initial proposal, we identify different image operations grouped into three axes: image trickery, image-circuit, and image-resistance. These operations highlight circulation as a value relation in interactions, reshaping the complexity of the ongoing conflict, as it is crossed by multiple discursive layers revealing the mediatisation logics employed to show/construct the war and its various forms and effects.

[1] Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, Brazil, formerly Program Coordinator in the Postgraduate Program in Communication Sciences at Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), São Leopoldo, Brazil. Leader of the research group *Laboratory of Circulation, Image, and mediatisation* (LACIM) in the same institution. In 2022, she worked as a Visiting Professor at Sördetörn University through the Capes-STINT program.

From Circulation to the Case Analysis

Understanding communicational processes today inevitably involves the notion of circulation. It means observing what happens between production and reception, considering these two classical elements of communication not as separate but as interchangeable, intertwined, and in constant contact. Circulation moves us to another place: the realm of meaning disputes. The place of circulation is the "in-between," of indeterminacy, the dilation of times and spaces, of logic that eludes us or prevents forms of control, as meaning transforms in circulation. As communication analysts, a role we assume in this text, it is our responsibility, even in the awareness of incompleteness, to reconstruct operations and paths to tentatively capture what moves inflows.

Therefore, to observe circulation and its complexity, we turn to images and social imaginaries. We assume that in the context of mediatisation, where access to media devices and discursive space is increasingly amplified, there is an eruption of imagery productions from different sources, including journalistic, non-media institutions, and frequently from social actors. These productions reveal underlying logic since videos, photographs, real-time war broadcasts, and their front are not merely produced for visibility or the democratisation of perspectives but are images designed for circulation. In other words, visible marks of strategies and value operations guided by mediatisation logic (Braga 2014) are evident.

To understand circulation in its dynamics, we propose to construct a case analysis marked not by the observation of a specific medium but of a set of audiovisual productions (videos and photographs) with broad repercussions, allowing us to comprehend the meaning operations these images generate. It is important to note that the case analysis is not tied to a specific event, although the mediatised conflict is marked by events triggered by the images themselves; that is, the images create the event.

Thus, this article is structured in three parts: the first discusses mediatised conflicts and their transformed nature, the second debates image operations through the articulation with empiricism, and the third provides a reflective synthesis of body images and their durations in the face of mediatisation logics. Therefore, our focus is not on the reasons for the establishment of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, but rather on scrutinising what these images do as operations of meaning. As an initial proposal, we identify three axes of images at play that we choose to consider in this work as image operations; that is, these are images that do something, no longer contemplative, windows, or screens (Flusser 2002): image-trickery, image-circuit, and image-resistance.

These operations highlight circulation as a value relation in interactions and will be explored throughout this work through articulation with empiricism.

Mediatised War: a Conflict in a New Era

The conflicts between Ukraine and Russia are not recent; on the contrary, they have a long history. Crimea, a focal point of disputes in 2014 and also in 2022, for example, experienced war in 1854. It is considered a landmark of the modern era, as it started to incorporate different technologies such as steamboats, rifles, or even photography to document and manipulate conflicts. Roger Fenton became widely known as the first war photographer. Hired by a publisher in Manchester, UK, he was sent to the conflict area with the support of the British government to document the moment. This process produced a set of images questioned for their authenticity because, to depict a "clean" conflict, Fenton would have manipulated various images, altering scenes and even moving the bodies of victims. The first image considered a war scene is the famous "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" (Figure 1, below) and is regarded as the first instance of image trickery.

Over the years, many conflicts have occurred, becoming increasingly technological in their execution and also in their mode of social visibility. An example is the Gulf War in the 1990s, where television played an important role not only in what to show but also in what not to show. Much of what was broadcast "live" amounted to flashes of lights attempting to demonstrate the scale of the attacks. However, it was during the Gulf War that the first embeddings of reporters gained notoriety, bringing the frontlines of battles into homes through accounts on television and in print. Thus, we can indicate that the Gulf War represents a step forward in the mediatisation of conflicts, as not only do hegemonic media gain space, but the very logics of war start to consider media and mediatisation logics as a basis.

Figure 1 – The famous scenes from the Crimean War, in photographs by Roger Fenton, 1855. Source: Roger Fenton, *O Vale da Sombra da Morte. Estrada com balas de canhão*, 1855.

An important explanation is needed here – the distinction between media logic and mediatisation logic. According to José Luiz Braga (2014), this differentiation is necessary because media culture is commonly associated with media logic, which is centred on the influence of the media and the dependence on its themes and modes of operation, presupposing little inventiveness on the part of social actors. However, the author emphasises that

> The presence of media logic in the process of mediatisation is undeniable. However, we wonder if mediatisation simply corresponds to the penetration of media logic into an inertial cultural change. If that were the case, the variations observed in various social fields would be a kind of mathematical average between the previous logics of each field and the logics received from the media. I do not deny, absolutely, the power of the media, nor their significant impact on multiple interactional processes in a society undergoing mediatisation. I also do not assert that other intervening logics will be better or more relevant than these. However, it is necessary to recognise the presence of other processes that distinguish themselves from those, and that can reinforce, redirect, or experimentally produce other logic – becoming, then, media logic, reversing the direction of impact (Braga 2014: 19. Author's translation).

For the author, considering mediatisation logic implies reflecting on the logic of media processes, that is, on tentative processes and social experimentation. Such processes take into account, obviously, the actions of the media and technological dimensions but encompass appropriations, the expansion of interactional spaces, circuits, and, of course, their contextualisations and decontextualisations. With that said, this article is based on the idea that what characterises a mediatised war is not the fact that it is in the media, but rather how this war is elaborated and woven from a set of social experiments with distinct and specific objectives, transforming even the logics of more established media.

In the current Russia–Ukraine war, there is a proliferation of videos and images that draw on the knowledge that was didactically presented by the media in the 1990s and has become a constituent part of our way of living in society since the 2000s. If, in 1991, reporters enlisted to document the front, in 2022, soldiers themselves document their daily lives on TikTok. This is what we are talking about and why there is an ongoing process of mediatisation, as it has long been configured as a reality, as Verón (2014) aptly points out in his text on mediatisation as a socio-semio-anthropological process. With each new conflict, more intense forms of mediatisation are noticeable, and this does not concern new media used but the incorporation of mediatisation logic into the practices that constitute and precede any conflict action.

In this sense, thinking about mediatised conflicts involves studies conducted in different European countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. Hjarvard and Mortensen (2015) argue that currently, mediatised conflicts are no longer just mediated and involve dynamics that generally fall into three categories: Amplification, framing, and performative agency and co-structuring are the dynamics that manifest in combined and complexified ways to varying degrees. One of these complexities, for example, is the infiltration of media into conflicts, as seen in Gaza or new forms of embedding, a practice adopted in the Gulf War, for instance. The authors also point out new dynamics

or updates, such as the presence of social actors on the scene, producing narratives about conflicts beyond the traditional "police/army-media" interaction model. Moreover, new dynamics include the production of images by different actors for inscription in circulation through various media, especially on social networks. Such materials gain strength by constituting circuits and shaping social discourse. Even armies and governments now utilise digital media spaces to present their views on conflicts, beyond and independently of mainstream media, thus amplifying the arenas of struggle.

In other words, the dynamics of mediatisation are so intense that they do not confine circulation to the territorial space seemingly in dispute, particularly because what is at stake is often not physical but immaterial – power. In summary, mediatised conflicts lead us to problematise, on one hand, the role of media and the derived social dynamics and, on the other hand, to reflect on the new types of conflicts that emerge from mediatisation and to what extent previous conflicts continue as chasms. Thus, it is not only about going to the battlefield but about the realm of the mediatisation of an imaginary woven in the circulation of meanings. It is in this direction that we understand the importance of conceptualising mediatised war as a theoretical construct marked by a set of meaning operations that precede and accompany military operations in both physical and communicational territories. mediatised war, much more than any idea of mediatising war (or putting it in the media), reveals "durations in time," as the images and meaning operations of other mediatised conflicts (with previous wars) accumulate and coalesce through the circulation of images.

Images in Circulation and the Operations of mediatisation: When Seeing is Doing

Circulation, as already mentioned in this text, is today one of the central elements in thinking about communication. Not because we are concerned only with what resonates or is repeated in the media, such as redundant images, but because circulation concerns the space (temporal and of action) between production and recognition (Verón 2004). It becomes an operative instance of communication, as meaning is effectively produced not by one or another link in the process but in dispute, in contact.

When we talk about circulation as a space, we are not referring to means of communication, even though circulation has its visible endpoint precisely in media devices. To understand circulation, it is necessary to recover its traces; therefore, observe the operations of meaning, which can be reconstructed from the inscribed traces of materialities. In terms of images, this requires observing

their inscriptions and absences in multi-devices, involving multiple "actors." Therefore, in this article, we do not intend to delimit a specific device or medium but to observe images in their dynamism and based on what they do and what they stimulate, as Didi Huberman (2012) points out.

Thus, we understand that images, in the context of mediatisation, are produced and designed for circulation. In other words, there is no event, whether it be an attack or a war, that is not transformed into a media event and an image. Images go far beyond records; they condense the world and translate who we are while making things happen when inscribed in circulation. Take, for example, the mediatised war between Russia and Ukraine; it occurs in different territories, but in the media, we have a clash of meanings sparked by the image itself from a social discourse that also establishes itself in media spaces such as social networks, appropriated by different actors, from Putin to Zelensky.

However, the images put into circulation, produced to gain visibility and be seen, are not always images produced by those who put them in the flow (Braga 2012). Often, on the contrary, they are the result of appropriations, reworkings, and belabourings. These movements imply new ongoing meanings or the maintenance of shadows that attach themselves to the circulation process and, inevitably, to circularity. In this aspect, returning to Didi Huberman, we can think of images in motion, expressing symptoms, memories, and survivals. For example, an image from 2012 may resurface in 2022 to embody a conflict to which it does not belong, but due to its valorisation in circulation, it gains new conditions of existence.

In this way, circulation is the result of an intense interactive game that occurs based on the notion of contacts and hybridisations. Each contact or coupling requires an effort to produce meaning. For example, the image of the attacks in Ukraine recorded by satellite cameras, and published in mainstream media, is linked to publications and actions triggered on Twitter, coupled with new productions by social actors on their devices. There is a chain of productions, co-productions, appropriations, and redefinitions that carry meaning forward through circuits, putting into practice movements of *phagia*[2].

In this sense, it is interesting to think that circulation is not limited to products that circulate or develop circularity potential (comings and goings) but in the struggle for meaning production that takes place, tentatively, within media devices. Thus, the images explored in this text can be understood as agents of interactive circuits because, with each new publication, there are repercussions, reworkings, and various interpretations that result in tensions, confirmations,

[2] From Latin, "to eat, ingest, devour".

or erasures of the image's force. Thus, we uphold the theoretical hypothesis that circulation constitutes a relationship of value attribution (Rosa 2016b; 2017). This is observable in the creation of circuits itself, as only images perceived and deemed relevant remain in circulation, demonstrating that with each new insertion, such images gain value, and are potentiated. In part, this explains why some images disappear, even though they are available for access. Or the opposite, why some images resurface.

When Seeing is Doing

Given the above, our interest is in exploring images as tactical operations in mediatised warfare, as elements that are designed for circulation and are responsible for sense-making. It is noted that the image is made autonomous from events or, as already mentioned in this text, its configuration as an event. Thus, based on both media and mediatisation logic, we identify complex circuits around images of the Russia–Ukraine conflict. Such circuits are co-produced by different agents, and in this sense, creating and circulating images, whether they are records, montages, journalistic, machinic, or imaginary, is mobilising operations of experiences. In the realm of mediatisation, it is no longer about contemplative or documentary images; they are image operations that go beyond the realm of hegemonic media but do not cease to inhabit or contain it.

Returning to Didi Huberman (2012), conflict images that surround us demand, in the context of mediatisation, the ability to look, and correspond to being able to discern where they burn and the symptoms they reveal. The image plays a central role in unsettling the observer. However, in mediatised conflicts, its role is also to make war happen before our eyes, through bodies and operations.

The first of these operations, the image-trickery, is as old as photography itself. As we have reported regarding the coverage of the Crimean War in 1854, we also identify trickery as an image operation in the current conflict in Eastern Europe. This image operation can be perceived in two moments: one in the appropriation of a decontextualised image and the debate about the staging of scenes with bodies in Bucha. The trickery image operation anchored in the actions of anonymous individuals on social media concerns a photograph, a frame from a 2012 video, featuring a Palestinian girl confronting an Israeli soldier. The scene known in 2012 as the "brave Palestinian girl" (Figure 2) was reintroduced into circulation in March 2022, being posted on Twitter (now X) and Facebook, and it is difficult to identify its first appearance. This decontextualisation-erasure operation of the initial meaning for reinsertion into the flow and engagement of new circuits led to hundreds of views and also triggered fact-checking processes in different news agencies. However, until verifi-

cations were made, the image of the Palestinian girl transformed into the image of the Ukrainian girl confronting a Russian soldier. Despite the impossibility of the record referring to Ukraine, whether due to aesthetic or territorial reasons, there is an absence of social references about the countries at war, as well as a strict blockade by both the Russian and Ukrainian governments for access and production of on-site images, allowing such occurrences of decontextualisation and trickery to take place.

Figure 2 – A trickery image from 2012 to 2022. Source: Raya FM, November 2, 2012.

The image came to be anchored by a small caption, "Ukrainian girl faces a Russian soldier alone; 'Leave my country alone,' among other words uttered by the brave girl." This verbal construction, associated with the appropriated image, resorts to the formula of the child, widely used to speak about conflicts such as those in the Middle East or migratory crises. Thus, from the circulation of this image-caption, different social actors began to argue about the Russian action against civilians and children. Despite the evident use of a false image to reference the war between Russia and Ukraine, it is noted that this image intensively produces meaning, strongly supported by emotional appeal, the unfamiliarity with the affected region, as well as digital archives, as available memories in residual images, which can be brought to visibility by the reinsertion of these images into the flow and their valorisation in interactions.

In addition to this image trickery involving mediatisation logic based on collection tactics, as mentioned by Braga (2012), other image trickeries were put into circulation, highlighting that in mediatised wars, this imagistic operation is central. Another episode of trickery occurs in questioning the image's veracity and an effort to produce proofs in circulation that indicate its falsifiability. One such case is the Butcha incident, a city heavily affected by Russian bombings and attacks resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people. Various images (figure 3) of the devastated city were exposed on social media and in journalistic media in videos that circulated with great strength on both the Ukrainian and Russian sides.

Figure 3 – Images of bodies in the streets question the veracity of the scene. Source: https://noticias.uol.com.br/internacional.

In other words, the images have become a space of discursive dispute beyond the physical territory. On one side, the Ukrainian government alleges war crimes and violation of international treaties due to the death of civilians on the streets of Butcha on 2 April of this year. On the other side, Russian government statements suggest that the April images were photomontages and that the scenes had been altered. There are even two versions of the same video circulating on Twitter: from the Russian perspective, one of the bodies moves, indicating simulation; from the Ukrainian perspective, it is a camera movement attempting to alter the evidence. Despite the debate about whether

the images are manipulated or not, the discussion around them leads to their valorisation in interactions, being widely debated, reintroduced, and viewed. Even hegemonic journalism started including versions of the videos and photos in their coverage, signalling a warning of "care, strong images," but before reaching the canonical media space, they had already been intensely replicated on social networks.

Unlike the challenge of the image trickery presented earlier, which referred to a conflict in Palestine, fact-checking agencies did not find evidence of manipulation, and it was countered by high-resolution satellite images that recorded the bodies in the streets during the mentioned period. In other words, surveillance images now serve as evidence for the photographic images of the conflict in Butcha, deconstructing the Russian version. The images become counterarguments that intervene between discourses. In this aspect, we have a mediatised war permeated by the polarisation of speeches, in addition to the war of images. These images act as developments of conflicts on the media level, not only among political and media institutions but also among mediatised social actors who continue to propagate these images. On Twitter (figure 4), videos and photos were reintroduced, generating diverse debates and interactions. For example, the comments below emphasise the need for America's intervention, the welcoming of refugees, warnings about the risk of nuclear weapons, or even the intensification of extremist views that portray all Russians as murderers.

Image-trickery as a meaning operation circulates tensions regarding the modes of occurrence of the conflict, the invisible violence in the streets, while accentuating discursive violence when social actors adopt xenophobic behaviours or encourage an America-centric stance, as there is recognition that Ukrainian refugees deserve to be welcomed. This raises questions about why the same engagement does not occur in mediatised conflicts related to the global south, such as the Syrian refugee crisis, among others. Thus, it is not about quesioning the interactions derived from the image operation but highlighting that they occur. This implies considering that the act of creating an image is not only about a way of seeing and understanding the conflict but also about a way of activating other circuits, also producing meanings in a kind of co-participation in the mediatised war to which we are all subject, even as researchers.

Figure 4 – Debate around images on X (Twitter), 2022. Screenshot by author.

Beyond the image-operation trickery, we identified two other types in this work: the image circuit and the one that has the power to constitute itself as an event, thus mobilising circuitry movements (Milani, 2019). That is, from its inscription and attribution of values in terms of interactions, it contacts new circuits that start operating in an interconnected way. In this aspect, an image gains visibility because dispersed social actors begin to carry it forward in their media productions. In this sense, the image circuit was produced with its visibility in mind, from the space where it is inscribed to how it is produced. When posted on social networks, other actors in the form of collectives begin to adopt the image, and then reproducing it in new spaces that reach all the way up to the hegemonic mediasphere, similar to the movements of intersystemic circulation studied by Mário Carlón (2019).

Here we have the production, for example, of the Ukrainian soldier Alex Hook, who has been using TikTok as a space for interaction and image production of a completely disruptive type of embedding. It is not about enlisting reporters but about the soldiers themselves, affected by the logic of media and mediatisation, who start incorporating content creation for networks from within the battlefield, not with the pain of war but with the perspective of those who expect to overcome it. By making dance videos (figure 5), typical of what the platform expects, the soldier and his companions enter the pop scene with choreographies from Michael Jackson or Nirvana.

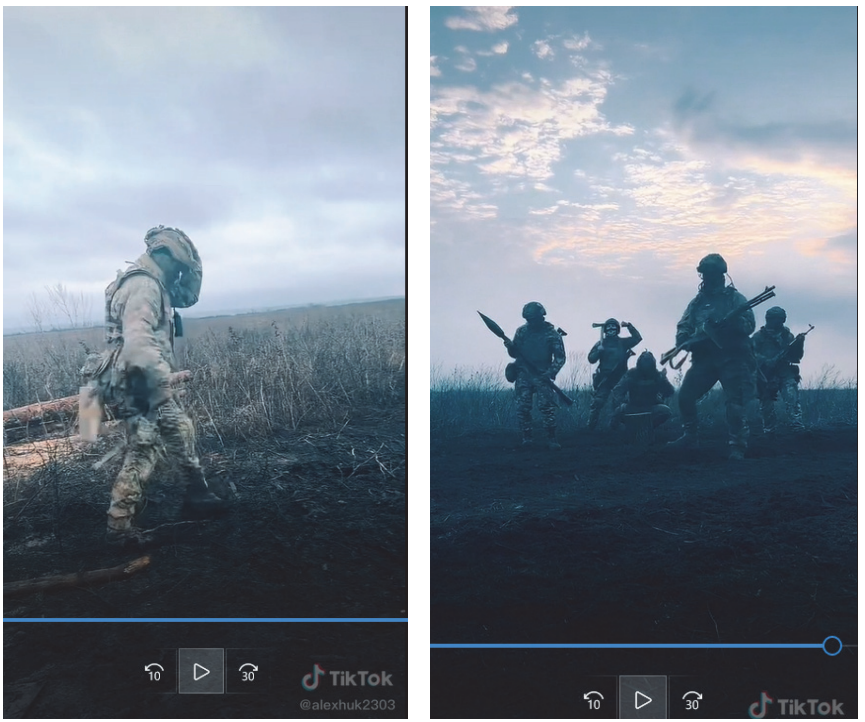

Figure 5 – Video of a soldier at the front via TikTok. Screenshot by the author.

The choreographies transformed into an image operation, identified here as image-circuit, begin to create a set of developments. The war confined to images of horror reveals images of life, of hope, and with this appeal, they are carried forward, introducing other ways of thinking and understanding the war. In this sense, the soldier Alex Hook has become a celebrity on social media. His videos have been seen by thousands of TikTok users and beyond. Followers began to monitor frontline posts (figure 6) in a kind of vigil for the lives of the soldier and his comrades, even counting the time between one post and another.

Fans ask for news if the videos are posted more than six days apart. What does this absence of production denote? On the other hand, journalism begins to construct an image of a hero soldier who creates his videos and images from the front to show the family, from which he has been separated, that he is safe. All of this plot, involving mythological elements of the hero, begins to trigger circuits, allowing another war to be woven.

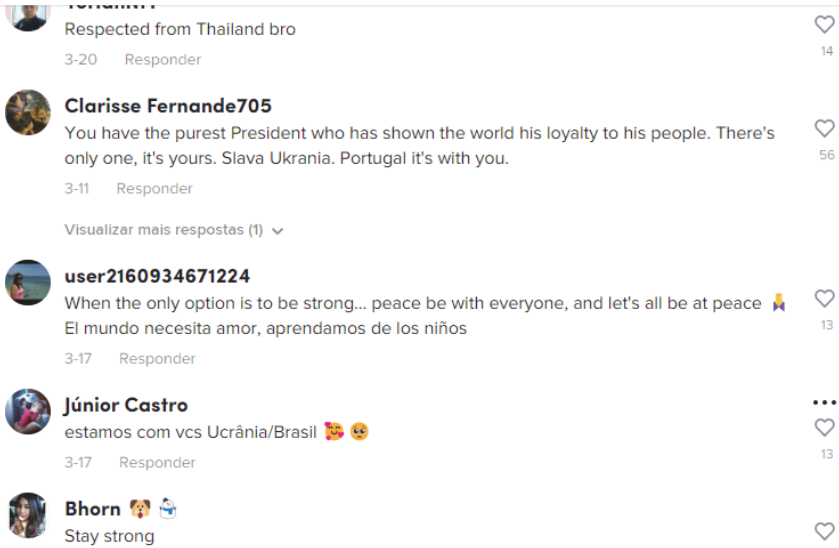

Figure 6 – Debate around performances on Twitter. Screenshot by the Author.

Finally, the third and last image operation that we will bring in this article, although certainly others can be mapped and even articulations between them can be discussed, concerns image-resistance. This image is unique as it carries elements of image trickery, considering the montage as its essence and its prior planning. It is an image that follows the media parameters established by cinema, television, and propaganda, widely practiced in documentaries and campaigns whose focus is an emotional appeal. It is characterised by an image that carries a media logic of storytelling, elaborated by communication professionals, carrying extensive work of composition, image selection, and effects, as well as an aesthetic text that effectively makes us feel the meaning. Image-resistance, as the name itself suggests, aims to resist not only the battle itself, but to resist as an ideal, symbol, and image. The image reinforces its own existence. It is a play that calls for interactions, from the moment when individuals are invited not only to reproduce the image and insert it into new circuits but also to resist competing images that try to present other perspectives. To understand this, it is necessary to compare with totemic images of other wars and conflicts.

The image-resistance (Figure 7) signalled here is a complex elaboration of meanings stitched together through black and white images of various Ukrainian cities in the 2022 war, mixed with images of conflicts from World War II and all the horror of Nazi Germany. Additionally, the approximately 15-minute video features Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as the main character and voice, wearing a black T-shirt with the phrase “I am Ukrainian” in English.

Leveraging his mastery of television media logic, Zelensky puts into circulation a powerful text, strong in terms of triggering memories of pain and summoning collective and social imaginations.

The video was published on government channels but also carried forward in spaces of different Ukrainian or non-Ukrainian social actors on 8 May 2022, precisely Victory Day, a date celebrated in both Ukraine and Russia about the victory against Nazism.

Figure 7 – The Ukrainian president in the engagement video. Source: Screenshot by the Author from Youtube.

Through an intense narrative in Ukrainian, with English subtitles, the play of words is articulated with the play of images that calls on viewers of different nationalities to also create images, also to take a stand against Russia. To some extent, the inflamed and rhythmic discourse invites us to move beyond the mere play of images and words, although this invitation is made through them, and to fight for peace, to resist. Image resistance appeals to adherence, a type of engagement that is not contemplative but is a choice of forms of battle. That is, to resist, one does not need to be in Ukraine wielding weapons but to assume the fight for peace. By strategically mobilising this imagery in a war propaganda production, Zelensky highlights his extensive knowledge of the protocols of media culture but also the strategies and experiments necessary in a mediatisation context where speaking directly, through one's own devices, not only reduces the institutionalised character but also brings closer, makes it belong. When images of other conflicts become present, they make it clear that they have never been forgotten or erased but act as backgrounds or abysses… "We will win, our flag will win again." Here is Zelensky's call. To move away from

the black and white, from desolation, the patriotic spirit, symbolised in the waving flag (figure 8), is needed.

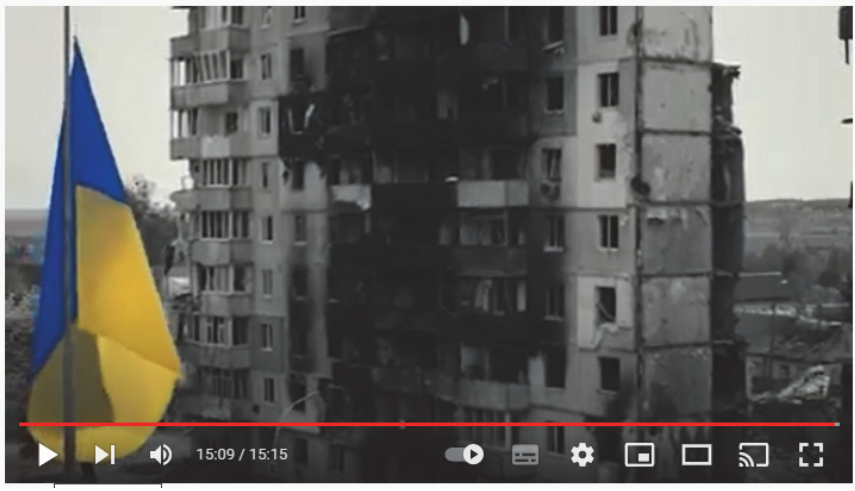

Figure 8 – The flag and dreams resist. Source: Screenshot of YouTube by the Author.

Of Images and Bodies: the Body in the Image and the Image-Body

Thinking about what elements weave a war, with how many threads, stories, lives, and bodies a war is made of, implies looking at operations that constitute the very nature of the conflict. In this case, it is not just any conflict; it never is. Here, we are facing a mediatised war, which even before being a war already existed as a project of becoming media, elaborated between what cannot be seen, such as Russia's actions, its manifestations in the country, the control of communication as a practice learned in the society of media, i.e., before the 1990s. This project of becoming is also conceived by what is tactically intended to be shown: ex-boxer mayors in battle, performing soldiers, torn families, ruined buildings, and children walking alone among the rubble. Against media control, the exploitation of social networks as a war strategy inserts the conflict into a set of dynamics that characterise mediatisation as a phenomenon and process. Couldry and Hepp (2020: 57) mention mediatisation as "the incorporation of technology-based media into everyday life practices is a long-term process that has deepened dramatically in the last 150 years."

The idea of technological incorporation is very productive here to think about its different dimensions. As a metaphor, the idea of incorporating media into everyday practices involves adaptability, uses, and appropriations that reshape social practices. On the other hand, incorporation involves the body,

either the body that adheres to various devices, such as cameras as an extension of eyes, or the body absorbed, retained, and conformed into an image.

Here, it is a matter of thinking about the duality of the body in the image vs. the image-body. Throughout this text, we perceive different operations of meaning that manifest the logic of mediatisation. Among these operations, we encounter images that agency, do, produce not only meanings through their contemplation but because they mobilise a doing of the subjects. Whether image-operation circuit, trickery, or resistance, they are action-images. Such images include bodies, recognisable or unrecognisable, seemingly human or entirely objectified, subjects or objects. The war of images is made of bodies. Those of soldiers, civilians, the disappeared, the rescued, ours who insist on reacting.

The images are the bodies, the materiality of the nonexistent event outside the recorded screen. Images delineate what we act upon, discursively, politically, and socially. "Images burn", as Didi Huberman (2012) would say, and because they are incendiary, they not only reveal the conflict as evidence of existence, but the images become bodies of the conflict itself, its concreteness. In other words, more than the image of bodies, it transforms into an image-body, an image that makes do, an image-reference in duration.

Enduring Abysses

Thus, we seek to bring the analysis of the circulation and image operations previously addressed closer to a very rich discussion developed by Aby Warburg in his study of the iconology of intervals. Warburg dedicated himself to composing the Mnemosyne Atlas, whose central element is the free assembly of images as plates. These images reveal a kind of abyss, as symbolic and aesthetic elements start to interconnect images separated in time.

In this sense, our final effort is to think of the abyss plates (a term we adopt, recalling the movement of the abyss perspective in photography) as a composition that emerges, methodologically, after the study of circulation. By halting the flow in plates, the effort is to recover the "transit" of meanings and how images inscribe and reinscribe themselves over time as shadows or in what Warburg (2015) called *naschleben* or afterlife. Here, a tentative sketch that highlights durations or abysses throughout times of conflict based on images circulated in the media related to the conflict.

Figure 9 – Panel 1, developed by the Author, 2023.

In the first panel (figure 9), we have the symbol of the flag that permeates multiple conflicts from 11 September 2001 to the war in Ukraine. The central role of the flag is resistance, conquest, and belonging. In common, the gesture of hoisting, the conquering hand.

Figure 10 – Panel 2, developed by the Author, 2023.

In the second panel (figure 10), the montages of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, are updated in Butcha. The movie-like scene of a crying child transformed into Ukrainian suffering, the endless lines of refugees that could be from any war-torn place, but whose origins determine the forms of treatment.

Figure 11 – Panel 3, developed by the Author, 2023.

In the panel above (figure 11), two very similar scenes – children on their swings. The one on the right is by Brazilian photographer Anderson Schneider, in Iraq, and the other was captured in Ukraine. What causes such an aesthetic, imagistic construction to resurface or endure? What is in it that remains in fluxes?

Figure 12 – Panel 4, developed by the Author, 2023.

The abyss, as expressed above, is characterised by the aesthetic and aesthetic repetition of the scene. The blood-stained hands in Shakespeare's Macbeth, in a cartoon against Bolsonaro (former Brazilian president), and against Putin (figure 12).

This set, apparently disparate, is not here to prove that there is an image synthesis but to highlight that the circulation of images does not involve mere repetition, pure propagation, but rather what transits in terms of meanings and comes to constitute an imaginary that circulates in the media and shapes us.

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III
Empirical Excavations

Ongoing War Narratives: Mediatisation of the Russia–Ukraine War in Brazilian and Swedish Newspapers' Front Pages

Camila Hartmann[1]

Introduction

As a part of the research I developed in my thesis, this text presents the results of a quantitative analysis of the mediatisation of the Russo–Ukrainian war as portrayed on the front pages of two newspapers representing the Brazilian (*Folha de S.Paulo*) and Swedish (*Dagens Nyheter*) mainstream media. This comparative study highlights similarities and differences in the front-page coverage between these two countries. The corpus for my analysis comprises printed front pages released by *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Dagens Nyheter* throughout the initial year of the war, spanning from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023.[2] The primary goal here is to share preliminary observations and findings derived from the empirical material, specifically focusing on a quantitative survey on the mentions of the war on the front pages of these newspapers.

The initial section delves into our comprehension of mediatisation and its impact on social dynamics, focusing on wartime scenarios. The second section offers insights into a year's worth of war-related data and details about Russian and Ukrainian immigration in Brazil. The third section elucidates the procedures employed in gathering the corpus. Subsequently, the fourth section entails the analysis, concluding with final remarks.

[1] Substitute professor in the Journalism program at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Porto Alegre, Brazil; and doctoral student in Communication Sciences at the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil. She was a visiting doctoral student at Södertörn University, Sweden, between August 2022 and May 2023.

[2] We are aware of approaches that assume the war between Russia and Ukraine may have started earlier, in 2014, for example. For the purpose of analysis, I define the initial moment from the most recent escalation, triggered by the so-called Russian special military operation against Ukraine on 24 February, 2022.

Mediatisation and Its Shrapnel

The research on mediatisation has been developed from diverse approaches; authors situated in different perspectives may be attempting to respond to the challenge explicitly stated by Scolari, Fernández, and Rodríguez-Amat (2021: 200): "Not all mediatisations are equal." My thesis focuses on the differentiated perspectives being constructed in Latin America and Europe. In broad terms, we can distinguish theoretical traditions into three major groups: studies developed in Brazil and Argentina, heirs of the premises of Eliseo Verón, and the institutional and socio-constructivist approaches developed in Europe (Hjarvard 2008; Hepp 2014; Braga 2015).

In summary, I assume mediatisation as a continuous process, of vast complexity, and whose development is enhanced as the externalisation of elements of social production, through technical materialities, becomes increasingly multifaceted. We conceive that this process occurs in various ways and takes on different characteristics in the time and space of each society. In this sense, following Ferreira (2016), I understand mediatisation as a specific epistemological angle for investigating media processes.

Implicating new ways of being in society, mediatisation also modifies our ways of experiencing conflict situations (Eskjaer, Hjavard and Mortensen 2015; Hoskins and O'Loughlin 2015). The debate on security aspects is compounded by new challenges due to the constant increase in platformed circulation of journalistic coverage (Silveira 2020). Specificities of the war between Russia and Ukraine waged in this mediatised environment must be weighed (Bolin, Jordan and Ståhlberg 2016; Bolin and Ståhlberg 2023).

From Brazil, it is worth recalling the commentary of psychoanalyst Christian Dunker (Tutaméia TV 2023) about a photo published on the front page of *Folha de S.Paulo* on 19 January 2023. He claims that the photo is a wonderful image of the country today, capable of organising our affects and providing elements to change the grammar of our conflicts, highlighting not polarity or duality, but shrapnel or fragments. Is this the new reading of wars in times of mediatisation? The referenced image is a double-exposure photo showing the newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as the target of a shot that did not hit him due to the protection of bulletproof glass. Circulating at a moment of the new government's first actions and efforts at legitimisation, the front page generated great commotion among intellectuals, journalists, and other personalities. As we analysed in a recent publication, the circulation of this edition of *Folha de S.Paulo* consecrates a certain editorial line through an editorialised front page that reveals the ambivalences of a Brazil embroiled in

political polarisation in the early weeks of a newly inaugurated President (Hartmann and Silveira 2023).

The journalistic front pages, as newspaper front pages or magazine covers, are configured as privileged institutionalised spaces to create and share values about the media they represent. They can be taken as an allegorical structure, the "talk of the town" in sports slang, the face and heart of the publication (Hartmann and Silveira 2018). Hence our choice to analyse the mediatisation of the Russo–Ukrainian war on newspaper front pages.

One Year of War in Numbers: War and Russian and Ukrainian Immigration in Brazil

Data related to the first year of the war (February 2022–February 2023) – which constitutes the period of my corpus – indicate that this is already the largest military crisis in Europe since World War II. It is also one of the most extreme humanitarian displacements in the worldwith 35% of the Ukrainian population forced to leave their homes – equivalent to more than 13 million people, including almost eight million refugees across Europe and over five million internally displaced in Ukraine. Sixty percent of its population now lives on the brink of poverty. A specificity of the Ukrainian context that cannot be ignored is the country's birth rate, which was already one of the lowest in Europe even before the start of the war. Regarding Russia, the exact number of migrants varies between 500,000 and 1 million people. The United Nations (UN) indicates that at least 18,000 people have died or been injured in the first 11 months of the war (data from January 2023). However, there is a large discrepancy in the information about deaths. Depending on the source, the number ranges from seven thousand (according to the UN; in addition to 11,000 wounded) to 300,000, according to military and/or independent sources (G1 2023; Ladeira 2023; Prange 2023; ACNUR 2023).

The relevance of researching this topic in Brazil becomes evident as there are still not many academic studies developed around the Russia–Ukraine war, especially in the field of communication studies in the country. Additionally, being a multiethnic and multicultural country, Brazil hosts immigrants and refugees, including Russians and Ukrainians. The southern region of Brazil stands out: in addition to a significant number of Russian immigrants settled in the city of Campina das Missões, in the countryside of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, there is a Ukrainian colony in Prudentópolis in the state of Paraná, which is mentioned in some front pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* and are part of the dataset presented in this chapter.

Brazil is home to one of the largest Ukrainian communities in the world, and the largest in Latin America. Ukrainians form the second-largest Slavic ethnic group to immigrate to Brazil, second only to the Poles. According to the Ukrainian-Brazilian Central Representation, there are approximately 600,000 Ukrainians and eighty percent of their descendants live in the state of Paraná, mainly in Prudentópolis. Data from the local government indicate that out of 52,000 inhabitants, approximately seventy-five percent are Ukrainian descendants. In 2021, Prudentópolis officially made the Ukrainian language the second local language. According to a survey by the International Migration Observatory (OBMigra) linked to the University of Brasília[3], from February 2022 to February 2023, 422 Ukrainian refugees received humanitarian visas from Brazil, and 555 Ukrainians applied for residence (Agência de Notícias do Paraná 2015; Lima 2021; Buedel 2023; Jornal Nacional 2023; Mantovani 2023).

According to the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Brazil, 35,000 Russians are living in Brazil. Campina das Missões hosts the largest Russian community in the country where about twenty-five percent of the population (approximately 1,500 people) maintain ties with Russia. Like many Russians living in other countries, including those trying to seek refuge from the war, residents in this city claim to be experiencing discrimination and threats simply because they come from Russia, even if they declare themselves opposed to the war. It is also worth noting that many pregnant Russian women are coming to Brazil to give birth – this theme also appears on the front pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* (Record TV 2022; Veiga 2022).

Corpus Collection Procedures

I searched for the front pages of the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo* on its website, in the section called "textos da edição folha" ("Texts from the Folha edition"). The front pages were available daily for free download. Exceptionally, if any edition was not available in the mentioned section, I turned to the Folha Archive[4]. The front pages of the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*, on the other hand, were collected at the Södertörn University Library and the Royal Library of Stockholm (Kungliga biblioteket) using the *Svenska dagstidningar*[5] software.

I observed all the front pages published by *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Dagens Nyheter* in the specified one-year period, totalling 1,423 editions. The signifi-

[3] See OBMigra's website, https://portaldeimigracao.mj.gov.br/pt/inicio/1715-obmigra.
[4] This option was used as an alternative, not as a standard, because it sometimes presents instabilities.
[5] See Svenska dagstidningar database https://tidningar.kb.se/.

cance of the number results from the fact that *Dagens Nyheter* usually publishes three daily editions: one printed in Borås (size A1) and two printed in Stockholm (size A4 and size A5). Exceptions correspond to some holidays and commemorative dates on which – unlike in Brazil – no editions of the newspaper circulate, as well as some dates when the software provided only two editions instead of the usual three. Another caveat: I identified that two editions had an advertising cover, and in that case the journalistic front page was on the third page. I believe it was pertinent to observe all published editions of *Dagens Nyheter* since my scope of analysis covers the entire newspaper regardless of location, considering, furthermore, that front pages sometimes differ between editions. In so doing, this survey corresponds to 445 different front pages and 612 identical front pages repeated across different editions. Table 1 presents this division by month:

Table 1 – Total number of front pages published by *Dagens Nyheter*. Source: Author's compilation.

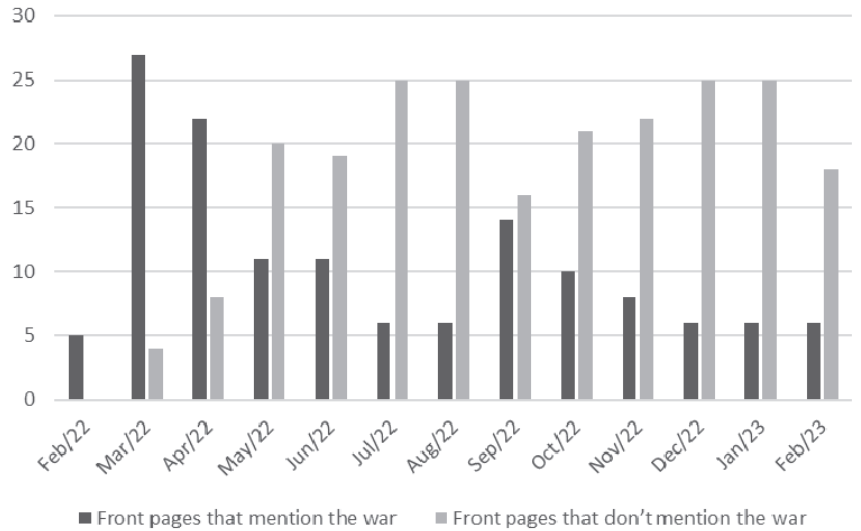
	Total number of front pages published	Total number of repeated front pages published	Total number of unique front pages published
February 2022	14	9	5
March 2022	92	56	36
April 2022	84	48	36
May 2022	86	47	39
June 2022	84	51	33
July 2022	93	49	44
August 2022	93	58	35
September 2022	88	53	35
October 2022	93	55	38
November 2022	86	48	38
December 2022	87	44	43
January 2023	85	48	37
February 2023	72	46	26
Total	1057	612	445

The Russo–Ukrainian War on the Front Pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Dagens Nyheter*: A Quantitative Survey

The analysis presented here comprises a quantitative survey identifying front pages that feature some aspect related to the war, either directly or indirectly,

regardless of the emphasis given to the theme, whether it's a prominent reference, such as a main photo, or a subtle mention in a note.

During the period covered by the analysis, *Folha de S.Paulo* published 366 front pages. Less than 40% of them featured some aspect related to the war. The following graph summarises the quantitative survey for *Folha de S.Paulo* by month:



Graph 1 – Mentions of the war on the front pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* per month. Source: Author's compilation.

All five front pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* published in February 2022 here analysed mention the war. Starting from March 2022, one month after the war began, *Folha de S.Paulo* no longer mentions the war on all of its front pages. The first day when nothing about the war appears on the front pages is 25 March 2022. Of the 31 front pages published in that month, 27 mention the war, while four do not. In April, 22 front pages mention some aspect of the war, contrasting with eight that do not mention it.

The month of May marks a turning point. In the preceding months, February, March, and April, the number of front pages alluding to some aspect related to the war is higher than the number of front pages that do not talk about the war. But from May onwards, the number of front pages that do not feature any war-related subject is considerably higher than the number that mentions it. It is noteworthy, as I will comment later, that September breaks this pattern. Many numbers correspond to 20 front pages that do not mention the war, against only 11 that do. The data for June are almost the same: the

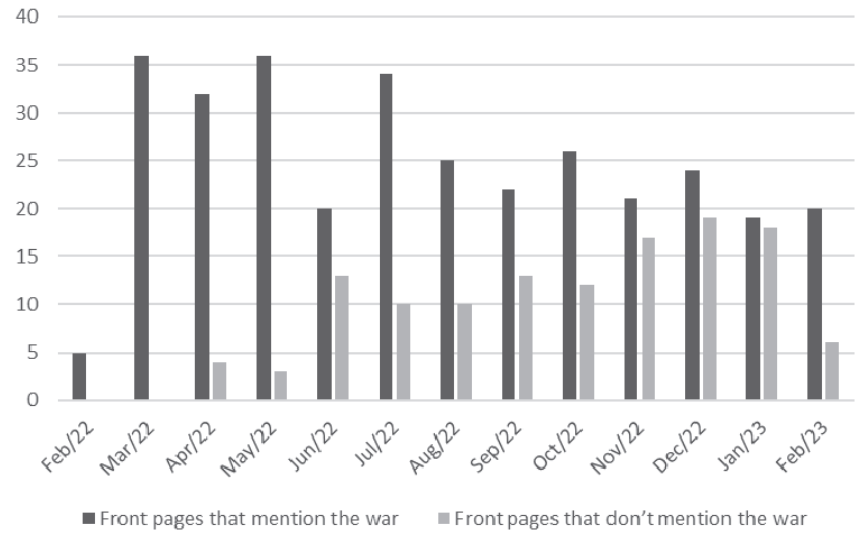
same 11 front pages mention the war, while 19 do not mention anything about it. 25 is the maximum number of front pages from the Brazilian newspaper that do not mention the war in a month, and July sets this record, with only 6 front pages mentioning the war, and the same goes for the month of August.

In September, the number of front pages mentioning the war increased: 14, against 16 that did not. The mentions do not have much prominence on the front pages; generally, they are brief comments in notes, secondary headlines, or captions, without images, and only four of the mentioned front pages feature any image related to the war. Topics covered include the gas crisis in Europe, a reaction from Ukraine, a meeting between Presidents Vladimir Putin (Russia) and Xi Jinping (China), and Russia's annexations in eastern Ukraine.

Of the 31 front pages published by *Folha de S.Paulo* in October, 21 do not mention the war, and ten do. In November, these numbers correspond to 22 and eight, respectively. In December, the record of front pages that do not feature any aspect related to the war returns: 25, against six that mention it. January repeats the data from December. Finally, in February 2023, of the 24 front pages analysed, only six mention the war and 18 do not.

For a more accurate presentation of results, the survey on *Dagens Nyheter* front pages that mention some aspects related to the war considers only different, unique front pages, not repeating ones, i.e., from a set of 445 front pages. Over seventy percent of them mention the war.

Given that I do not know the Swedish language and recognise all the limitations involved in translating foreign language content, I used the Google Translate tool to assist in translating the verbal content of the front pages. The translation is not always coherent, especially when there is no explicit reference to the war. In cases where I was unsure about the subject matter, to confirm the mention, I consulted the complete edition of the newspaper in the library software archives (Södertörn or Kungliga biblioteket, depending on the date) or on its website – a login through a subscription was required. Graph 2 summarises the quantitative survey for *Dagens Nyheter* per month:



Graph 2 – Mentions of the war on the front pages of *Dagens Nyheter* per month. Source: Author's compilation.

As we can see in the graph, each month, the number of *Dagens Nyheter* front pages mentioning the war is greater than the number that does not – this means that more than half of the analysed front pages published in the month by the newspaper mention the war. The difference between the front pages that mention and those that do not tends to be quite significant, ranging from 14 to 33. The months of June and September reduce this difference to seven and nine front pages, respectively. However, in November, December, and January, when the number of front pages featuring some aspect related to the war was lower, further reduced to five or fewer.

All five front pages of *Dagens Nyheter* published on the dates in February 2022 here analysed mention the war, as do all 36 front pages in March. Of the total 36 front pages published in April, only four do not mention the war, contrasting with 32 that address it. 17 April 2022, is the first day when no aspect of the war is addressed on the front pages of the Swedish newspaper, i.e., seven weeks after the start of the war – it is worth noting that in the Brazilian newspaper, this milestone occurs on 25 March 2022; therefore, there is a difference of almost one month (three weeks, to be exact) between the first day *Dagens Nyheter* did not publish anything related to the war versus *Folha de S.Paulo*.

In May, the number of front pages that do not mention the war is even smaller, only three, against 36 that do. June is the first month when *Dagens Nyheter* shows a significant decrease in war coverage on its front pages: 13 editions do not mention the war; 20 do. July is the month with the highest number of dif-

ferent front pages published by the Swedish newspaper: 44, followed by December, with 43. In July, 34 mentioned the war – ten did not. In August, ten front pages did not feature any aspect related to the war; on the contrary, 25 mentioned the war. In September, the number of front pages that do not mention the war increases again: 13, against 22 that do. Of the 38 front pages published in October, 26 allude to the war; 12 do not. The front pages of 21 editions published in November mention something related to the war, despite 17 that do not. In December, out of 43 front pages, 24 mention the war; 19 do not.

January is the month with the fewest mentions related to the war on the analysed front pages of *Dagens Nyheter*. It is the month where the ratio is most similar: 19 front pages mention the war, against 18 that do not feature any element related to the war. In February 2023, in conclusion, the mention became significant again: out of 26 front pages, only six do not mention the war; on the other hand, 20 do.

Additionally, regarding the quantitative analysis of *Dagens Nyheter*'s front pages, the following table systematises the editions with different front pages published, indicating which front pages were the same and which differed, and when they mentioned some aspect related to the war, directly or indirectly. Similar colours mean that the front pages correspond; a different colour means that the front page of the edition differs from the others published on that date.

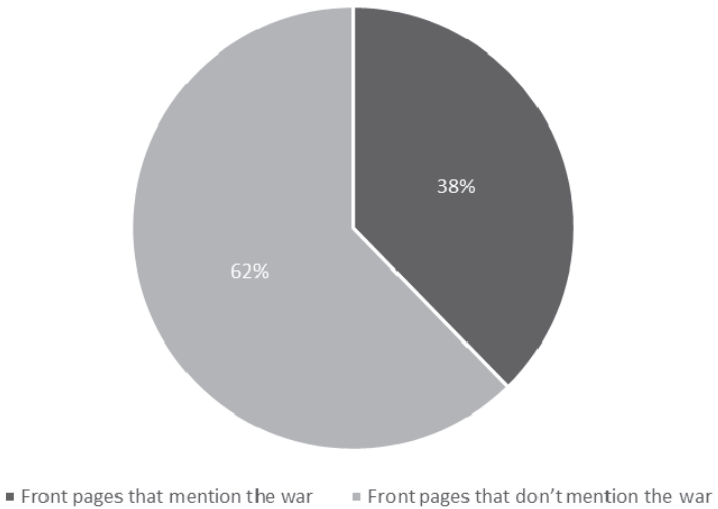
Among the editions with different front pages, the only ones that differ in whether or not they mention the war are the front pages published on the 12 and 15 September 2022, and the 21 and 24 January, 2023. On 12 September, three distinct front pages were published: the front pages of the Borås edition and Stockholm A4 mention the war; Stockholm A5 does not. On 15 September, the front pages of Stockholm A4 and Stockholm A5 are the same and do not mention the war, while the Borås front pages do. On 21 January, the front pages of Borås and Stockholm A4 mention the war; Stockholm A5 does not; finally, on 24 January, there are again three distinct front pages: Borås and Stockholm A4 mention the war; Stockholm A5 does not. This differentiation may be addressed in the qualitative analysis of the thesis: considering the implications of these results, what is the significance of an aspect related to the Russo–Ukrainian war appearing on the front pages circulating in Borås, a city in western Sweden, as opposed to another that circulates in the capital Stockholm?

Table 2 – Editions with different front pages published by *Dagens Nyheter*. Source: Author's compilation.

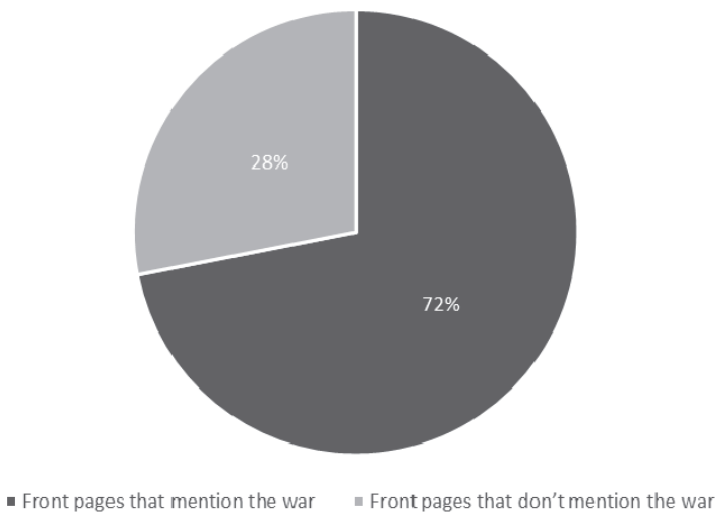
	Borås A1	Mentions the war	Stockholm A4	Mentions the war	Stockholm A5	Mentions the war
08/03/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
13/03/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
21/03/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
30/03/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
05/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
08/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
09/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
13/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
16/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
25/04/2022		No		No		No
26/04/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
05/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
08/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
13/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
18/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
19/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
20/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
23/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
25/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
29/05/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
03/06/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
07/06/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
10/06/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
13/06/2022		No		No		No
29/06/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
01/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
04/07/2022		No		No		No
07/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
10/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
12/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
14/07/2022		No		No		No
15/07/2022		No		No		No
17/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
18/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
23/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
27/07/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes
01/08/2022		Yes		Yes		Yes

13/08/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
14/08/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
05/09/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
09/09/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
12/09/2022	[redacted]	Yes	[redacted]	Yes		No
15/09/2022	[redacted]	Yes		No		No
08/10/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
10/10/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
12/10/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
24/10/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
29/10/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
30/10/2022	[redacted]	Yes	[redacted]	Yes		Yes
15/11/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
16/11/2022	[redacted]	Yes	[redacted]	Yes		Yes
18/11/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
25/11/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
28/11/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
29/11/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
30/11/2022	[redacted]	No	[redacted]	No		No
01/12/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
02/12/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
03/12/2022	[redacted]	No	[redacted]	No		No
02/12/2022	[redacted]	No	[redacted]	No		No
07/12/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
10/12/2022	[redacted]	Yes		Yes		Yes
11/12/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
14/12/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
15/12/2022		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
19/12/2022	[redacted]	No		No		No
30/12/2022	[redacted]	Yes	[redacted]	Yes		Yes
09/01/2023		No		No	[redacted]	No
11/01/2023		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
21/01/2023		No		No	[redacted]	Yes
24/01/2023	[redacted]	Yes	[redacted]	Yes		No
26/01/2023		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
27/01/2023		No		No	[redacted]	No
28/01/2023		Yes		Yes	[redacted]	Yes
07/02/2023	[redacted]	No	[redacted]	No		No

The next two graphs allow for a comparison of the percentage of front pages from *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Dagens Nyheter* analysed here according to their mentions of the war. A total of 811 front pages were examined to establish this differentiation (445 from *Dagens Nyheter* plus 366 from *Folha de S.Paulo*).



Graph 3 – Percentage of *Folha de S.Paulo* front pages with mentions of the war. Source: Author's elaboration.

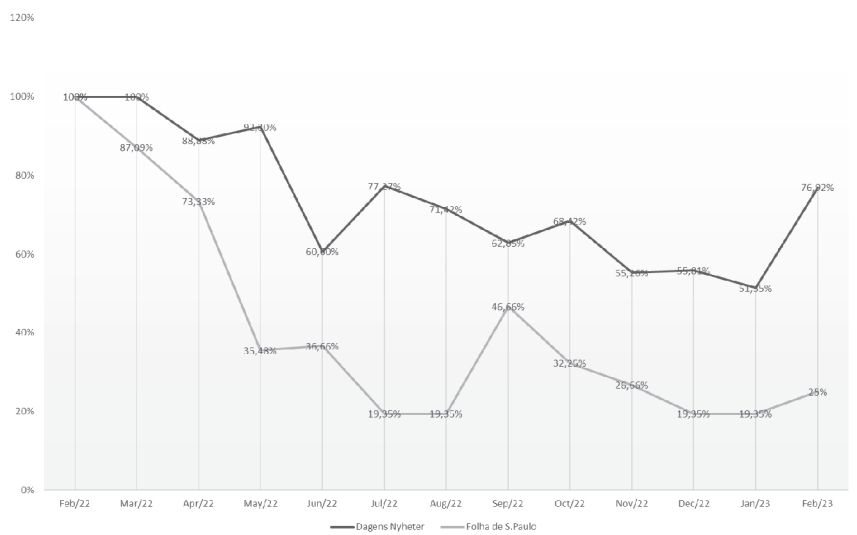


Graph 4 – Percentage of *Dagens Nyheter* front pages with mentions of the war. Source: Author's elaboration.

138 front pages from the Brazilian newspaper (thirty-eight percent of the total) featured some aspect related to the war. The other 228 front pages, corresponding to 62%, did not. The proportion in *Dagens Nyheter*'s front pages is almost inverted, as shown in Graph 4.

Out of 445 front pages, 320 (72%) mentioned some aspect related to the war; the remaining 125, constituting only twenty-eight percent, did not.

Finally, the subsequent and last graph illustrates the monthly progression of front pages with mentions of the war in both newspapers proportionally to the total number of front pages analysed for each. The darker line is associated with *Dagens Nyheter,* and the lighter line is associated with *Folha de S.Paulo*. It is worth noting that comparing the two newspapers using absolute numbers, as done thus far, would not be possible due to the lack of proportion resulting from the difference between the total monthly front pages published by the Brazilian newspaper and the Swedish newspaper. Considering that *Dagens Nyheter* has a pattern of publishing three daily editions compared to only one edition of *Folha de S.Paulo*, it was necessary to establish a standard size for both. Percentages were assigned to the front pages that mention some aspect related to the war in relation, or in proportion to the total number of front pages published in the month.



Graph 5 – Monthly progression of front pages with mentions of the war in *Folha de S.Paulo* and *Dagens* Nyheter. Source: Author's elaboration.

Following the trend already depicted in the previous graphs, this graph illustrates that *Dagens Nyheter*'s front pages mention the war much more when

compared proportionally to *Folha de S.Paulo*'s front pages. In the Brazilian newspaper, we can identify that the decline begins in March and deepens from April to May. The line remains almost stabilised between May and June, drops again from June to July, stabilises between July and August, experiences a considerable increase in September, and the line gradually decreases until December, stabilising until January and increasing again at the end.

In *Dagens Nyheter*, the decline is small from March to April. From April to May, there is a slight increase, followed by a sharp drop from May to June (one month after it occurs in *Folha de S.Paulo*, therefore). From June to July, there is a considerable increase in the line, followed by gradual declines until September, a small increase in October, a new decrease in November, a minimal increase in December, a new drop in January, and a considerable increase in February. This final line in *Dagens Nyheter*'s front pages, with variations, continues in a very different way than in *Folha de S.Paulo* – in this case, since September, the line only drops or stabilises.

The month with the greatest disparity in coverage is July – while over 77% of *Dagens Nyheter* front pages mention the war, only 19.35% of *Folha de S.Paulo* front pages do. The most similar month, except February 2022, in which both newspapers discuss the war in all analysed front pages, is March: all of *Dagens Nyheter* front pages featured some aspect related to the war, compared to about eighty-seven percent of *Folha de S.Paulo* front pages.

Final Considerations: Our Conflicts Are Different

As the quantitative analysis has indicated, the Russo–Ukrainian war receives much more prominence on the front pages of the Swedish newspaper than on the front pages of the Brazilian newspaper. Clues from a qualitative analysis, which will be conducted in the thesis following the quantitative survey presented here, indicate the same: our conflicts are different. *Folha de S.Paulo*'s front pages suggest that Brazil's internal conflicts, such as the issues related to crime, poverty, and hunger, to name a few, would deserve more space in journalistic coverage than the war between Russia and Ukraine.

This understanding is rooted in the comprehension of the news values that govern the journalistic production of a Brazilian newspaper and a Swedish newspaper in the face of the current war. The criteria of newsworthiness naturally differ from each other, implying that another perception or grammar of war would be in force in Brazil – a reality that could be defined as a hybrid war or informational war, not necessarily characterised by armed conflict, tanks, and bombs, but by conflictive procedures stimulated greatly by political polarisation and the resulting bubbles of disinformation that spread through digital platforms.

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Unpacking Notions of Anxiety, Scepticism, and Technological Solutionism: Analysis of Public Debates on Artificial Intelligence in the Swedish Newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*

Maurício de Souza Fanfa[1]

Introduction

We conceptualise technology based on our cultures, shaped by our global relationships. Yuk Hui (2020) refers to the unique characteristics of how each culture constructs and relates to technology as cosmotechnics. Thus, just as human cultures are diverse, so is technology. Hui labels this phenomenon as technodiversity: "There is no one single technology, but rather multiple cosmotechnics" (2020: 25). However, diverse social processes promote the homogenisation of existing techniques globally, favouring some over others. In maintaining technodiversity, a refusal of homogenisation is crucial. Studying and systematising the cosmo-technics of each culture is a way to resist colonialism, according to Hui: "Reopen the question of technology is to refuse this homogeneous technological future that is presented to us as the only option" (2020: 46).

This is a call for the preservation of technodiversity that finds a solution in the study, systematisation, and maintenance of cosmotechnics. So, we may ask, what are Brazilian cosmotechnics? One way to begin answering this question is by reflecting on the differences in the role that technology plays in other cultures and societies, such as in Sweden. As such, this article is part of a broader study dedicated to understanding these issues from a global perspective. Specifically, we aim to develop initial exploratory notions for the analysis of the public debate on technology: anxiety, scepticism, and solutionism are articulated through belief, doubt, and trust.

[1] PhD in Communication Sciences from the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil. Fanfa was a visiting post-doctoral researcher at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, from August to November, 2023.

The analytical experimentation based on these observations is conducted on a public debate that unfolded during May 2023 in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. The debate involved seven opinion texts identified through research in Brazilian and Swedish newspaper archives on relevant technological innovation in the period, Artificial Intelligence (AI). The analysis is conducted with inspiration from controversy studies and discourse analysis.

In the following section, we describe how mediatisation articulates cultural elements analysable through sociotechnical imaginaries. Then, we present the definition of our empirical object. Finally, we analyse the debate in question in light of the notions explored earlier, experimenting with its potential.

Mediatisation and Sociotechnical Imaginaries

We start with the concept of mediatisation, considering that communication technologies change in correlation with changes in society and vice-versa. Muniz Sodré (2014) describes mediatisation as "a sociocultural mutation centred on the current functioning of communication technologies" (ibid: 109). In an earlier work, Sodré (2002) developed the concept of the *virtual bios*, a way of living constituted in media relations, resulting from the process through which the media permeate social relationships. According to the author, this way of living restructures the cognitive aspects of human life.

Thinking of mediatisation as a diachronic process of transformation opens space to think about the future. The future is constructed, among other ways, through the actions, intentions, and thoughts of social agents in the present and the past, articulated by the imaginary. If we consider mediatisation to be a metaprocess, as Friedrich Krotz (2007) argues, the concept organises itself as an invitation for reflection on sensitivities and transformations provoked between the media and other processes, such as globalisation.

We can consider imagination as a social practice, constructed by the landscapes of globalisation, concepts schematised by Arjun Appadurai (2004). Thinking of the imagination as an agent of mediatisation involves articulating notions that the author understands as *technoscapes* and *mediascapes*. The suffix *-scape*, as used by Appadurai (2004) about the notion of landscape, invites us to investigate global irregularities and disparities, thus being useful for intercultural reflections proposed by the project within which the present study is inserted.

Landscapes are, according to Appadurai (2004), the building material of imagined worlds. As we will see next, the analysed debates echo global positions, "the work of the imagination […] is a space of contention in which individuals and groups seek to attach the global to their practices of the modern"

(ibid: 16). Imagination is a social practice, a negotiation of projects for ways of seeing and constructing the world, as well as the organisation of collective aspirations. Investigating how technology has been debated in Sweden and Brazil involves understanding the flows constructed in such landscapes.

Furthermore, the concept of sociotechnical imaginary, as described by Sheila Jasanoff (2015), serves to highlight and identify collective visions of the future influenced by advances in science and technology that reveal the topographies of power that act upon them. Jasanoff (2015) emphasises the similarity of the notion to the concepts of discourse and ideology but highlights its potential as a specific terminology for dealing with the materiality of technoscience. Another potential of the concept is to investigate discrepancies in social relations caused by technoscientific advances at different times, places, or cultures.

Langdon Winner (1989) argues that technical artefacts have political forms. In that sense, they incorporate forms of power and authority and should be studied in their political relations with society. They are not merely neutral instruments. According to Winner, our condescension and indifference toward discussions and reflections on the political aspects of technology are characteristic of a "technological somnambulism", making us susceptible to such authoritarianism. Hence, we highlight the analytical advantage of studying a debate on a specific technological innovation, without forgetting that controversial issues do not necessarily overcome the condescension characteristic of somnambulism.

A Scheme for the Analysis of Positions in Technology

The present work is dedicated to schematising initial notes on the positions taken by social and political agents – such as public intellectuals, journalists, social commentators, representatives, and activists – in the debates surrounding artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. To reach these sociotechnical imaginaries being constructed, the empirical framing of debates about AI stems from the contemporary emergence of widely-used technologies like ChatGPT, sparking significant debates since late 2022, and the spreading of generative technologies on a wide range of activities. Global adoption has ignited heated debates worldwide, offering rich material for analysing how the interplay between the social and the technological is imagined and projected. The daily newspaper emerges here as an empirical research object useful for a first approach to the theme. The opinion spaces of debate promoted by such publications provide a detailed and easily comprehensible glimpse into the empirical analysis.

We refer to newspaper chronicles, opinion columns, and letters from readers, among other forms of expression conducted by newspapers that partly

represent the main debates of public opinion. The first step consisted of organising a corpus of opinion columns for analysis. The term "artificial intelligence" and derived expressions were chosen for research and material selection. Initially, three Brazilian newspapers (*O Globo, Estadão*, and *Folha de São Paulo*) and five Swedish publications (*Dagens Nyheter*, *Aftonbladet*, *Expressen*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, and *Dagens Industri*) were selected.

Regarding the time frame, the month of May 2023 was selected. The media file and monitoring system Retriever indicate that the peak in the number of articles on artificial intelligence in the Swedish-language print media was in May 2023. The Google Trends tool shows a similar result, indicating a peak in interest in research on the subject between April and May of that year. The mentioned Brazilian newspapers had peaked in the quantity of articles in February 2023, followed by another in April. May was thus chosen, considering the amount of available material and the presence of quantitative peaks in both countries.

A preliminary reading of all the material was then conducted. Articles from Swedish newspapers were consulted with automatic translation. Common issues were identified in both countries that characterise the period globally, such as the regulation of AI by the European Parliament and risk declarations made by pioneer and expert associations in the field, such as the Center for AI Safety (2023) and the Future of Life Institute (2023). Both countries also published articles on chatbot functions like ChatGPT, artistic uses of artificial intelligence, and issues posed by technology for education or democracy, among other topics.

Initial notes were then taken. One of the most relevant phenomena initially observed was a certain unfolding of optimistic or pessimistic perspectives toward technology. A binary view categorising opinions between those who accept AI naively and those who criticise AI vehemently would not be sufficient. We experimented, therefore, initially, by framing the question in the triangular scheme presented below.

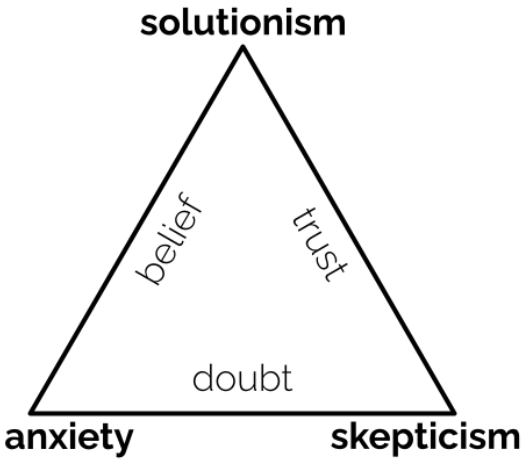

Figure 1 – Triangular Scheme for Analysis. Source: Developed by the author.

The developed scheme unfolds the concept of solutionism by Evgeny Morozov (2014). Through the notion of solutionism, Morozov (2014) argues against the tendency to oversimplify complex social issues required by the belief that technology can optimise anything. Solutionism is a false confidence that masks the root causes and overlooks the risks of the solutions.

The solutionist vertex, here, rejects doubt by articulating trust in belief. It focuses on the values it shares with technology, losing sight of those that could be objects of criticism and naively abandoning doubt. These concepts, briefly introduced here, will be explored in more detail in further studies.

This concept can be folded into its anxiety and scepticism's forms. The sides of the triangle highlight what they have in common, despite their perceived differences. The anxiety vertex is characterised by an excessively apprehensive stance that technology – any technology, and in the present case study, specifically AI – will radically, negatively, and uncontrollably transform society. It is flanked on either side by a belief in doubt, in this case, doubt about whether AI technology is as optimal as the solutionists present it. Such a position runs the risk of apocalyptically denying technology and also masking root causes.

The vertex of scepticism is marked by a trust in doubt and a denial of belief. Belief, in this context, is positioned in the unknown and the future, while trust is placed in the ostensibly known and the present. Unlike anxiety and solutionism, scepticism does not engage in the debate about the values of technology. Seeking clarity in sobriety ends up not articulating a stance that is either critical or I. The risk of such a position is losing sight of agency over technology by simply rejecting reflection on its capabilities.

Analysis of a Debate

The structure created from the above-described preliminary reading and reflection was applied in the in-depth analysis of a debate conducted in the opinion columns section of the Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*. It involves seven opinion columns published during May 2023. The debate in question can be considered a continuum, as the initial column prompted responses that mentioned it. It should also be viewed as an attempt to establish connections within a controversy.

Table 1 – Debate Summary. Source: Prepared by the author based on publications from the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*.

Title in English	**Original title**	**Author**	**Date**	**Reference**
Stop humanising technology and see AI for what it is	*Släpp förmänskligandet av tekniken och se AI för vad det är*	Ulf Danielsson	03/05/2023	Danielsson, 2023a
Why board a plane with a 10% chance of crashing?	*Varför bordar ni ett flygplan med 10 procents risk att störta?*	Andrev Walden	06/05/2023	Walden, 2023
What happens if a superior intelligence is indifferent to other beings?	*Vad händer om en överlägsen intelligens är likgiltig inför andra varelser?*	Olle Häggström	10/05/2023	Häggström, 2023
Time to drive away the demons in the debate about AI and the future	*Dags att jaga bort demonerna i debatten om AI och framtiden*	Ulf Danielsson	12/05/2023	Danielsson, 2023b
Keep an eye on tech companies. Sure, AI systems are complex – but that's not our biggest problem	*Håll koll på techbolagen. Visst är AI komplexa system – men det är inte vårt största problem*	Petter Törnberg	19/05/2023	Törnberg, 2023
Man and machine. Human and social knowledge is needed for the debate about AI not to spiral out of control	*Människan och maskinen. Det krävs mänsklig och social kunskap för att debatten om AI inte ska balla ur*	Johan Fredrikzon	22/05/2023	Fredrikzon, 2023
If AI learns from history, we might be saved	*Om AI lär av historien kan vi kanske räddas*	Fredrik Sandgren	23/05/2023	Sandgren, 2023

The seven texts form a network of referentiality that indicates the cohesion of the debate. They can be schematised in terms of concurring and dissenting references in the figure below.

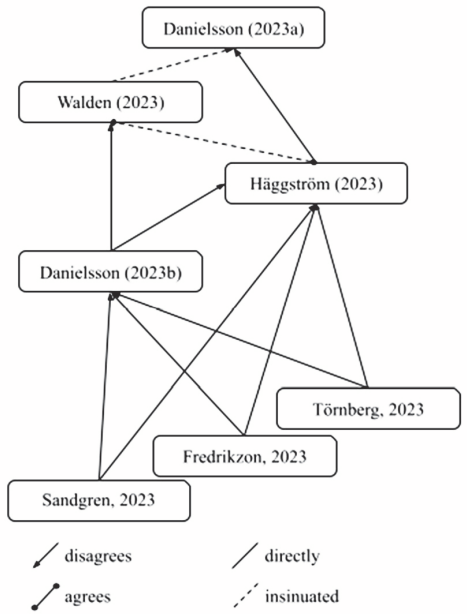

Figure 2 – Opinion Network. Source: Prepared by the author based on publications from the newspaper *Dagens Nyheter*.

This stage of the study integrates theoretical and methodological resources inspired by discourse analysis (Orlandi 2000) with elements from the study of controversies (Latour 2012). As will be demonstrated in detail below, the debate begins in a polarised manner and then opens up to various perspectives that seek to escape the triangular logic. The presentation of polarised positions created an inviting scenario for debate where more nuanced positions and varied perspectives were expressed. Few conclusive statements are made.

In general, the discourses published by the newspaper consider autonomous technology, with some effort to construct arguments perceiving it as humanly controlled. Similarly, the debate on values is diverse, generally considering it laden with values but often assuming the understanding that it is neutral and endorsing the instrumentalist perspective, in which technology serves human intentions.

There is no mention of geographical elements in these debates; that is, their location is implicit through the agents. Historical elements appear very briefly,

with one of the columns explicitly adopting a historicising approach (Sandgren 2023). There is an attempt to bring the debate into the realm of economic power and criticism of big technology companies; however, it does not delve into specific or intersectional topics such as social inequality, class, race, or gender.

The Debate Began with a Sceptical Statement

The debate in question begins with an opinion letter written by Ulf Danielsson (2023a). The letter occupies a page and a half in the "Idé & Kritik" (Ideas and Critique) section on 3 May, a Wednesday. It is illustrated by an abstract illustrative photograph representing a human head with motion blur and the brain highlighted luminously.

Ulf Danielsson is a Professor of Theoretical Physics at Uppsala University, specialising in string theory. He is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, where he also serves as the secretary of the Nobel Committee for Physics. He is also a science communicator, frequently appearing in the media.

The letter had a small mention on the culture section's cover of the newspaper, reading "AI and the end of the world: apocalyptic prophecy is based on vague speculations, writes Professor Ulf Danielsson." Other highlights on the cover include coverage of the Grammy nominations, political critiques, and articles on literature.

The right page shares space with a small note at the top about a joint statement by Russian authors against the war. Most of the left page features an article on the literature of Cilla Naumann, a Swedish writer. Half the top of the page comprises an article about the use of algorithms in creating TV and film scripts. The other half comprises a small cartoon supporting the campaign for the freedom of Dawit Isaak, a Swedish-Eritrean writer imprisoned in Eritrea since 2001.

Ulf Danielsson (2023a) takes a sceptical yet instrumentalist stance. The author denounces the superficiality and speculative nature of apocalyptic perspectives, especially their tendency to personify AI systems. The text has a metadiscursive nature as it generically discusses different perspectives on the subject, such as the open letter calling for a halt to AI model training, according to the author

Danielsson acts as a sceptic, evident in phrases like "no AI will be able to produce reliable weather predictions for much longer periods than is already possible today" (Danielsson 2023a: 9, author's translation). This is classic scepticism, as it ignores the possibilities of new ways of understanding and calculating weather forecasts emerging.

Also, Danielsson (2023a) makes an effort to dispel the common notion that linguistic ability implies consciousness or the ability to act. The author claims there is no consensus on what can be considered consciousness. Although, according to the author, language models have linguistic articulation capacity equivalent to what can be considered intelligent, they still lack a physical body and, therefore, the ability to independently interfere with the world. The author's intention here is to criticise the apocalyptic understanding that AI can behave essentially maliciously in its relationship with humans.

Markedly sceptical, Danielsson (2023a) reinforces his neutral position by comparing AI to other inventions considered of neutral value, such as fire or the steam engine. The fragility of the neutral argument becomes evident here when listing the steam engine as a mere tool at humanity's disposal. The steam engine, when considered in the historical context of industrial capitalism, reveals itself as a transformative invention in the world of work, production of goods, and other social relations.

Anxiety Takes the Spotlight

Another opinion column, initially not directly related, is authored by Andrev Walden (2023), a journalist, illustrator, and columnist at *Dagens Nyheter*. Walden's column (2023) indirectly refers to Danielsson's text (2023a) by mentioning the comparison between AI and the steam engine. The author's main point is an argument from authority, suggesting that the concerns of some developers and researchers should be enough for society to be concerned as a whole. Walden (2023) expresses his discomfort with the mockery directed at those who express concerns about advances in AI. His column, published on Saturday 6 May, 2023 occupies almost a full page in the newspaper, in addition to a short editorial about the right-wing party *Sverigedemokraterna* (Swedish Democrats or SD) and its political leadership aspirations at the bottom of the page. In the edition's front page, there is a small mention of Walden's column, in addition to drug trafficking, the coronation of Charles III, and the relationship between Chinese political values and chatbots in the country.

In his text, Walden (2023) presents an anxious stance and a belief in the autonomous condition of technology, including superhuman capabilities such as superintelligence. In the author's words, a superintelligent AI could eventually be hundreds of thousands of times more intelligent than Albert Einstein and have an IQ of 12000. The author believes that creating such intelligence would be like the voluntary abdication of humans from the top of the food chain. Walden's commentary echoes commonplace and superficial arguments. The attempt to quantify intelligence suggests a linear and restricted understand-

ing, ignorant of the multiple possible forms of intelligence. The notion of a food chain is an inadequate and anthropocentric metaphor, as humans are far from occupying high trophic levels, a condition of animals like polar bears and orcas. The column relies on the mention of authorities, without describing their arguments, merely repeating catchy clichés of the apocalyptic stance.

The sceptical-anxious belief has stalled the debate

On the following week, on Wednesday, 10 May 2023, a critique by Olle Häggström (2023) was published in the "Ide & Kritik" (Idea and Critique) section. It takes up only one page, which it shares with a note calling for the coordination of Russian authors against the war. The page is illustrated with a close-up of a finger clicking on an icon of the ChatGPT application. There is also a small photograph of Häggström's face. Häggström's text (2023) also had a mention on the cover of the culture section. Olle Häggström is a Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg and a specialist in probabilistic calculation. He is also a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. In 2016, he published a popular science book on the potential risks associated with new technologies.

Olle Häggström (2023) criticises Danielsson (2023a) more cautiously and with a more grounded approach. The main argumentative move is to criticise what can be called sceptical belief, especially the claim that AI would not be able to reach a certain level of ability. He mentions having signed the letter calling for a halt to AI research and justifies this stance hoping that advances in the fields of ethics and security can precede further developments. The author supports his belief in connection with doubt (Figure 1) by resorting to the notion of a black box to claim that even developers do not know what happens in language models characterised as AI. He reverses Danielsson's (2023a) statement: if we don't know what consciousness is, how can we say it cannot emerge in language models?

Häggström (2023) continues to use linear expressions like "superior intelligence" to characterise the potential of AI. The linear logic of surpassing human capacity cannot be considered suitable for the debate, as it produces a quantitative and anthropocentric metric. It leads only to an endless dilemma where one side of the debate is accused of naivety and the other of speculation, both articulating their rhetoric, beliefs, and imaginaries. The debate about the powers and impotence of AI continues in the hypothetical realm. We enter the space of debate that David Gunkel (2023), following Hegel, identifies as "bad infinity". It is a debate without power, stalled, where the points raised do not produce conclusions.

The Reply Suggests an Empty Convergence

Danielsson's reply (2023b) to Häggström (2023) was published on Friday, 12 May, and takes up less than half of the right side of the double spread, also in the "Idé & Kritik" section but without prominence. It shares the page with an article about a musician and is illustrated by an image of a monitor with the letters "AI" in blue. There was no mention on the cover in that edition.

The author attacks Häggström's (2023) claim that the human brain and computer circuits are comparable. He indicates that the complexity of the biological system is much superior to simple computer circuits, preventing a comparison. Such an argument remains limited to linear debate, indicating complexity as a numerical and quantifiable element of its components. The complexity of a computer system is indifferent to its ability to surpass human skills, as dedicated simple systems can surpass specific abilities.

Danielsson's (2023b) second accusation is that Häggström's (2023) and Walden's (2023) stance fosters a position of supernatural fear. He claims to be as concerned about the issue as his critics but does not explain this agreement, keeping it empty. He reinforces that believing that AI could be superhuman is a dangerous stance in itself because it suggests that such AI could be equated with deities. This stance considers that the conclusions of AI are oracular or prophetic, and dangerous movements can arise from such illusions. Danielsson (2023b) accuses such a perspective of demonising, i.e., a kind of faith in supernaturality and a deviation from the relevant points of the debate. Asserting that the reception of technology would build a supernatural trust in AI is a highly speculative leap.

Enter the Economic-Business Debate

Entering the debate is Petter Törnberg (2023), agreeing with Danielsson's (2023b) argumentation but disagreeing with his conclusions. Törnberg is a Professor of Complex Systems at Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden, currently, an Assistant Professor of Computational Social Science at the University of Amsterdam, specialising in the use of computational methods and digital data for the study of social media. The column begins by explaining that complexity is, in fact, related to the structure of the system and not necessarily to the quantitative number of components.

Törnberg's (2023) letter occupies a significant part of the odd-numbered page in the same section on Friday, 19 May. It is illustrated by a composition representing the ChatGPT application, highlighting the logo of the responsible company, OpenAI. It shares the page with another column that, engaging in

another debate, explains that migration does not hinder the language development of children.

Törnberg (2023) then resorts to a comparison between language model parameters and synaptic connections in the brain, a comparison that he concludes by equating the GPT-4 model to a domestic rat. Such a comparison is inappropriate and extrapolated, equating the computer system to the biological. Its backdrop involves the inclination to anthropomorphise AI. To question it, it suffices to remember that a rat cannot do what the GPT-4 model does. In practice, this argument follows a quantifiable logic.

Törnberg (2023) then redirects the debate by highlighting an economic aspect of the issue. While abstractions are being discussed, such technologies are being developed by giant companies in the sector whose business models involve the massive collection of personal data. Törnberg (2023) thus contributes to the debate by arguing that such companies develop these technologies not for public interest, but for profit. He suggests that the focus of the debate should shift away from dystopian speculations and toward preserving democratic institutions.

The Critique of Technocratic Debate Appears to Double Down on Scepticism

Johan Fredrikzon (2023) joins the debate in the following week advocating for a perspective that acknowledges significant advancements in AI while, at the same time, also emphasising the importance of addressing real-world problems. Such a conversation, for Fredrikzon (2023), would be considered sober ("nykter") on the subject. He suggests, therefore, that the debate until now was not sufficiently qualified because it was either uncontrolled or exaggerated. Fredrickson is a professor of History of Science and Technology at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) and his current research focuses on the history of ideas about artificial intelligence.

Fredrikzon's (2023) text was published on Monday, 22 May, and follows the established pattern of occupying a little more than half of the odd-numbered page in the "Ide & Kritik" section. The column is illustrated by a photo of a wooden articulated doll, the type used for artistic poses, using a keyboard. Peeking behind the keyboard, the face of another wooden doll spies on what is being typed. The accompanying column on the page, this time, deals with the relationship between the government and the institutional freedom of universities.

If we consider sobriety a value opposite to anxiety, Fredrikzon's (2023) concern falls into the field of trust (see Figure 1). Similarly, by emphasising the phrase "real problems of the world" ("världens faktiska problem"), the author

suggests a departure from the solutionist idea, which he believes relies too heavily on technological advancements for solutions. Instead, he appears to advocate for an approach related to doubt. The articulation between doubt and trust would be scepticism; however, scepticism is marked by ignorance of certain advances here, as Fredrikzon (2023) calls for "acknowledging that unexpected breakthroughs occur" ("erkänner att oväntade genombrott sker"). Although the author is pronouncedly in a field that rejects anxiety and solutionism, he actually doubles scepticism towards the path of criticism.

In the previous comments from Danielsson (2023a, 2023b) and Häggström (2023), he identifies convergence in concern but divergence in the meaning of what can be considered intelligent or what constitutes intelligence. The question raised by Fredrikzon (2023) in response to such a debate is that, currently, such definitions are no longer considered relevant. He identifies that we have adjusted to the concepts and vocabularies proposed by technocrats narrating about such technologies, under which his critique falls. The author suggests that we should then ask ourselves where such ideas came from, and who defines that the debate should be in such terms.

Summoning a Historical Perspective as a Solution

During the analysed period, the last letter to enter this debate is from Fredrik Sandgren (2023). Like the previously analysed letter by Fredrikzon (2023), Sandgren begins by summarising the two arguments that opened the debate. From the consideration of both, the phrase "it is reasonable to state that we do not have definitive answers" ("Det är också rimligt att konstatera att vi inte sitter på facit") uttered by the author suggests a position that distances itself from anxiety, thus cooling down the doubt.

Sandgren is a professor of Economic History at Uppsala University, and is an expert in the history of industrialisation, economic development, and technological innovation in 19th century Sweden. His text was published on Tuesday, 23 May, on the odd-numbered page of the section, but this time appears in the lower third of the page, illustrated by a photo of concerned investors and red figures on panels, depicting scenes from the 2008 financial crisis, according to the caption.

The largest section of the page occupies the central position and is an opinion column about party positions on security policies for nightlife and leisure activities. At the top, a small text engages in another discussion about poverty. The text has a mention on the cover of the culture section, sharing space with calls for articles on art and literature. Also in the news were the EU fine issued

to Meta/Facebook, a flood in Italy, Ukrainian refugees in Germany, and sanctions against Russia.

Sandgren (2023) declares his historical materialist position and constructs an anecdote whose final meaning is to reflect on the importance of his area of expertise in economic history. He states ironically that "perhaps, with the help of AI, we can finally learn from history!" ("kanske kan vi med hjälp av AI äntligen lära av historien!").

The author explains that if AI were capable of making solid conclusions about history, it would agree with the successful positions considered in economic history textbooks and know that dialogue, negotiation, and compromise formation are efficient actions. Thus, the author suggests that a super-intelligent entity would not dominate humanity in an apocalyptic way because it would prefer negotiation.

Sandgren (2023) takes the opportunity to make comments on other issues. He mentions, for example, that an AI informed by history would have advised Putin against the invasion of Ukraine. The unrealistic tone of the text, albeit ironic, suggests a solutionist stance.

The author engages in the main debate by proposing that true intelligence is to study history. Indeed, historical aspects have been neglected by the main positions in the debate so far, but the author presents it in a somewhat insular way. What occurs is that, ambiguously, by implying that definitive conclusions about history can be reached, the author obscures the reality that successful historical analysis often depends on subjective interpretations and interests.

Final Considerations

As demonstrated, a polarised debate was nuanced by perspectives that sought to escape the triangular logic between anxiety, solutionism, and scepticism. There was no effort to declare strong conclusions in the debate analysed during the delimited period. An endorsement of the instrumentalist perspective is present, especially linear thinking about advancements, but also critical positions.

The notions of anxiety, scepticism, and solutionism have proven to inspire reflections in the analysis, suggesting the presence of a myriad of approaches overlooking the complexities of sociotechnical issues. These act as false dichotomies, with their forms feeding into a highly mediatised debate in itself, designed for a daily newspaper and optimised for an audience appeal. Subsequent studies should dedicate themselves to the deepening and conceptualisation of these approaches and how public relations and editorial decisions shape them. The next steps in this research should consider other Swedish newspapers and Brazilian newspapers.

Debates like this one serve as an opportunity for the public to engage and explore different perspectives on how technology should be designed, thus shaping a public social imaginary about technology. However, on the other hand, they are also entangled with a mediatised logic of public debates and the marketing of audiences, which is gatekept by newspaper editors.

The debates analysed here represent emerging approaches on the subject, particularly those with an enhanced capacity to sediment in society as they circulate with the support of their authors' popularity and publisher authority, and with some level of prior acceptance. In this sense, it also reflects the approaches that the media sector seeks to publicise and integrate into social imaginaries.

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Mediatised Newsrooms in Sweden and Brazil and Their Impacts on the Journalism Profession

Marcio Morrison Kaviski Marcellino[1]

Introduction

The concerns addressed in this research stem from my encounters as an individual grappling with the transformations observed in my own professional life. My initial awareness of how mobile devices, specifically smartphones, became integrated into daily practices occurred during my tenure as a reporter for a newspaper, altering the familiar dynamics of my work.

Consequently, my research is framed within the perspective of mediatisation. This approach involves scrutinising social phenomena and their practices within a context where devices (technologies) and individuals are intricately intertwined in logic, processes, and disputes of meaning.

This study aims to comprehend how the utilisation of mobile devices reshapes journalistic practices in both Sweden and Brazil within a mediatised context. The choice of the verb "reshape" is deliberate, underscoring our belief that fundamental journalistic practices and processes persist (such as agenda-setting, content production, source verification, etc.), but what truly transforms is how journalism is conducted within a context where technologies and mobile devices modify the day-to-day dynamics of production and reception.

Methodologically, this study involved conducting in-depth interviews with journalists from Brazil and Sweden. In total, nine Brazilian journalists from three different newsrooms in Curitiba-PR and seven Swedish journalists from four newsrooms in Stockholm participated in the interviews.

The chapter is structured to include a theoretical discussion on symbiotic relationships, mediatised journalism in the context of mobile devices, and the methodological process that encompasses interviews with professionals from both Brazil and Sweden.

[1] PhD candidate in Communication Sciences at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos (UNISINOS), São Leopoldo, Brazil. Guest doctoral student at Capes-STINT Agreement at Södertörn University, Sweden (2022–2023). He is a member of the research groups LACIM and Midiaticom at UNISINOS.

Symbiotic Relationships

The concept of symbiosis, originating from biology, denotes a profound relationship between two entities, wherein there may or may not be a dependency between the species. In biological contexts, distinctions are made among parasitism (benefiting only one entity with harmful effects on the other), mutualism (benefiting both entities), and commensalism (benefiting only one entity without any harmful impact on the other).

Our aim here is to use the concept of biology as a metaphor to comprehend the relationships between mobile devices and journalists in the day-to-day operations of newsrooms. It is crucial to highlight that we interpret symbiotic relationships as anthropological-social-communicational phenomena. In other words, the relationships between mobile devices (in their various forms) and humans impact the entire social fabric, as well as the prevalent practices and processes in our society.

Joel de Rosnay (1997), a French theorist, highlighted the close relationship between humans and technology. According to the author, this relationship, or "close partnership," gives rise to the symbiotic man. Moreover, in a broader context, media, communication, and technologies will alter relationships in our society, intricately weaving the social fabric and ushering in an information revolution.

> We are now entering the revolution of information and communication that is expected to take place in a few decades. These developments lead to an increase in the complexity of society and the organisations, systems, and networks that are within our responsibility. A complexity that challenges our traditional methods of analysis and action. (Rosnay 1997: 27. Author's translation)

The French theorist contends, however, that symbiosis occurs in distinct social contexts. In other words, not all relationships between humans and machines in our society unfold under the same conditions. The social, economic, and specific contexts of each situation must be taken into account. Therefore, there is a variety of layers that can emerge from the relationship between mobile devices and humans.

In the field of Communication, other authors explore the relationships between humans and machines. Marshall McLuhan (1964) discusses communication media as extensions of man. For instance, he sees radio as an extension of speech and listening, and television as a portrayal of image. Following in the footsteps of the theorists from the Toronto School, Derrick de Kerckhove (2015), a theoretical heir to McLuhan, introduces the concept of e-motivity and the extensions of offline feelings to the online world. According to the author,

"We turn to the Internet and social networks to express and share indignation, happiness, hatred, and irony" (ibid: 54). Here we find another example of how symbiotic relationships manifest in our society. Mobile devices, connected to the Internet, become essential for sharing extensions of our emotions in the online world. In other words, symbiotic extensions go beyond materialities and mediations, altering the logic, practices, and processes of the individual.

The symbiotic relationships portrayed here as metaphors, therefore, surpass the concept of interaction discussed in the field of Communication. In symbiosis, there is, in a way, a sociological, non-biological need to be connected to mobile devices. We schedule meetings in our calendars, seek information, and measure our heart rate, and blood pressure. This connection also extends to work relationships, such as in journalism.

It is in this context that mobile devices are utilised in the "act of journalism": developing topics, editing content, recording material, and producing multimedia content such as podcasts, video reports, or images. Marcellino and Fort (2018) argue that symbiotic relationships should be considered in journalism in three aspects: production (journalists), distribution (media products), and medium (the devices themselves).

Although the three spheres are depicted throughout the work, the journalist and the production aspect are the focus of the debate and research emergences. Building on this, Dutch theorist Mark Deuze (2013) proposes that mobile media assist us in producing new forms of sociability. However, in this discussion, there is a shielding or a displacement of what Deuze (2013) calls the zombie effect or phenomenon.

> This intensive and immersive use can be seen as our transformation into powerless addicts, slaves to the machines – zombies. We are zombies in the sense that we succumb mindlessly to the call of our devices; we are zombies because we use media in ways that erase our distinctions as individuals; we record and remix ourselves and each other with new technologies, and our society becomes zombified as we navigate through it – voluntarily or involuntarily – augmented by virtualisation technologies. (Deuze 2013: 114. Author's translation)

We can equate the concept of zombification to a dependence on the use and the lived experience with mobile devices. The persistent use, as identified by Deuze as zombification, contradicts our assertion that symbiotic relationships are a socio-anthropological-communicational immersion taking place in a mediated context. In other words, mobile devices, regarded here as integral to symbiosis with journalists, are not merely mediators of the process but a component and conduit for journalistic practices to unfold in a mediated context where it is no longer conceivable to consider technologies and subjects as inseparable.

Mediatised Journalism in the Context of Mobile Devices

Describing the context of mediatisation is crucial to comprehend the environment in which we are immersed and how communication practices and processes undergo alteration and reshaping. Pedro Gilberto Gomes (2017) positions mediatisation within a framework where devices are no longer perceived merely as mediators in a process but as integral parts of a larger mechanism.

> The society in the process of mediatisation is larger, more comprehensive, than the dynamics of communication carried out so far in the so-called media society. It is not only communication that is potentiated, that is, not just the possibilities of communication through extremely sophisticated technological means that characterise the current context; but technological sophistication, broadly speaking, ultimately determines the way of being, thinking, and acting in society. We designate this matrix environment as a society in mediatisation. (Gomes 2017: 134. Author's translation)

What Gomes (2017) contends is that mediatisation, along with the environment in which we find ourselves, positions us in a new way of living. In this paradigm, the social fabric undergoes restructuring through new social practices and processes in which media and communication are deeply embedded. There is a global shift in social relations that brings social actors closer together and gives rise to different forms of interaction and meaning production. These changes manifest in various sectors, such as the organisation of online scientific events, the platformisation of work, and journalism itself, where newsrooms are increasingly transmedia and operate remotely.

From the perspective of European mediatisation, Andreas Hepp and Nick Couldry (2020) argue that our actions and productions in the social world are directly linked to our media uses, indicating a mutual interdependence in the process. According to the authors, this interplay shapes the way we engage with and contribute to the social environment.

> To think about the social world and its different domains as 'mediatised' means assimilating that its construction involves communication practices that are, in turn, shaped by long-term processes of institutionalisation and materialisation, which we refer to as 'media.'" (Hepp and Couldry 2020: 52. Author's translation)

In everyday journalism, the mediatised environment and symbiotic relationships enable communication professionals to work in a deterritorialised manner. For instance, "live" reporting can be captured using a mobile device at the location of the event and shared through social media channels such as Insta-

gram, Twitter, Facebook, and other communication platforms present in smartphone apps.

The ability to share content among social actors is also a factor that is transforming the journalism profession in a mediatised environment. It is in this process that Antônio Fausto Neto (2015) discusses a movement of circulating meanings. In other words, there is a shift from field-related issues to flows and discourses.

The symbiotic relationships between journalists and mobile devices are an essential part of the movement of circulating meanings, as social actors increasingly become involved in the journalism production process. It is possible to observe Internet users discussing and suggesting news topics online, sharing images, and even creating opinion bubbles about news on platforms like Twitter or Telegram. In this context, even the theories of journalism change.

These changes give rise to what Ana Paula da Rosa (2016) conceptualises as "Media Phagia." According to the author, journalism professionals appropriate and produce content from emerging discourses on social media. In this process, social actors become part of the journalistic production context. According to Rosa (2016):

> The process may not seem new, but it is in the moment when one realises that uses and appropriations are in the service of mediatic action, that is, production is done for its circulation, which modifies the relationships between Non-Media Institutions, Media Institutions – especially journalistic ones – and social actors, as everyone starts to share the construction of social meaning. (Rosa 2016: 74. Author's translation)

What we observe, therefore, is that the context of a mediatised society brings about changes in the social fabric in various ways, including professional practices. However, limiting our discussion exclusively to this article is a return to journalistic processes in their original environment, namely, the newsroom and the practices that occur within it.

Methodology

To address the research objective, we conducted interviews with journalists from Brazil and Sweden to gain insights into how the use of mobile devices reshapes journalistic practices in a mediatised environment. We consider in-depth interviews as the most effective method for exploring the experiences of professionals in newsrooms. According to F. Keith Punch (2021: 198), "the interview is the most prominent tool for data collection in qualitative research." The author highlights that interviewing is an excellent means to access the

meanings and constructions of individuals' reality, allowing us to understand their perspectives.

In Brazil, we conducted nine interviews with journalists from three different newsrooms: *Paraná Portal, G1 Paraná, and Gazeta do Povo* – all located in Curitiba, PR. During the international phase of the research in Sweden, we interviewed seven journalists from three different newsrooms – *Dagens ETC, TT News Agency*, and *Sveriges Radio*.

The methodological process of the article is divided into two distinct phases of analysis. In the first phase, we explore the aspects of journalistic daily life and the relationships with mobile devices in daily practices in Brazil. Subsequently, we delve into the interviews conducted in Sweden. Finally, we analyse the materialities found in both contexts, establishing dialogues and parallels between the phenomena. While we acknowledge it as a global phenomenon with varying levels in each society, the relationships between journalists and mobile devices will be examined at all stages, always highlighting the social and cultural differences of each scenario, both Brazilian and Swedish.

a) The Brazilian Corpus

The methodological process occurred in January 2023 as an initial contact for the interviews that will be conducted for my thesis. Since I was in Sweden during this period, the responses were recorded remotely. Initially, it is noteworthy that four out of the nine journalists work from home, engaging in remote work, and none of the professionals visit the newsrooms every day of the week. This reflects a trend where working in newsrooms is no longer considered essential for the practice and exercise of the journalist's role.

Regarding the interviews, it became evident that there is a tendency for newsrooms to extend beyond the traditional newsroom space. This trend predates the context of the pandemic but has been accentuated by issues related to the COVID-19 situation.

> The pandemic imposed remote or partially remote work, something unprecedented for many newsrooms. It was discovered to be possible and feasible to work in this way, in some cases without drawbacks or even advantageous. I see that remote work has come to be recognised as a possible form of work, depending on the context and the needs of each newsroom. (Brazilian Interviewee number 3, 2023)

There is, therefore, an ongoing process with newsrooms becoming increasingly streamlined, operating remotely in smaller spaces. According to Brazilian Interviewee number 1, this transformation started in smaller newsrooms. The inter-

viewee noted that while working from home offers some possibilities, it also presents challenges in the process of gathering information.

> Newsrooms experienced downsizing in the years leading up to the pandemic, signalling a shift where journalists were already distancing themselves from the exact location of the news. Not all outlets have the resources to send a reporter to the scene of the story. Many people conduct their investigations from the newsroom itself. In my case, the portal mandated remote work since March 2020, which adds an extra challenge to the role. WhatsApp is a tool that anyone uses, but platforms like Skype and Zoom have become part of daily use. (Brazilian Interviewee number 1, 2023)

In this presented context, we observe a structural and conceptual shift in journalism practices. What we witness is a space immersed in a mediatised environment where the editorial office is no longer confined to a centralised physical space but exists in the myriad of possible connections facilitated by mobile devices. The editorial office undergoes restructuring and transforms into a mediatised editorial space where social practices and processes unfold in a deterritorialised manner, and the journalist's profession is executed anywhere with symbiotic relationships intertwined with the context. In other words, the journalist becomes a nomad in the production and constitution of communicational products. In this scenario, newsrooms are remote, and professionals rely on their mobile devices for the production, investigation, editing, and dissemination of their work. From this perspective, screens and online interactions are considered the actual newsrooms. According to the interviewee, it is impossible to think of the dissociation of the professional from the device, as well as of work from leisure.

> Everything is done through mobile devices when it comes to online journalism. I don't stop to think about how much time I spend on the computer and, especially, on my phone. It's something that can be quite scary because devices are a part of both my work and leisure. (Brazilian Interviewee number 2, 2023)

As a result, the very relationships of the individual as a journalist undergo alterations. There is no detachment from the profession. For instance, with WhatsApp, we are always connected, and there is a perception among professionals of the necessity to be available for matters related to our professional lives. These dynamics reshape the practices and processes within editorial offices.

> In journalism, it's difficult to respect 'work hours' because everything is dynamic. There have been instances where the Curitiba City Hall or the government of Paraná released statements before 5 a.m. on a Saturday. If it's important and

> someone is awake, they can produce it. Contact has become much closer despite the physical distance. Since everyone is not in the same place, it is necessary to be quick in defining the topics so that two people do not produce the same material. Within this scenario, it benefits those who already had a good working relationship before the start of the pandemic. (Brazilian Interviewee number 7, 2023)

Smartphones and communication professionals, therefore, operate in a symbiotic relationship. It is not within the scope of this specific work to define the exact nature of this symbiosis but rather to understand that it is a social, anthropological, and communicational phenomenon that impacts individuals. Inferences can be drawn from the statement of the Brazilian journalist number 8, who expresses that, according to the professional, the cellphone is an extension of the body.

> The cellphone is an extension of the body. Every journalist is connected 24 hours a day. They are fully immersed in the practices of newsrooms and private life as a whole. Contacts with sources, press offices, management, and colleagues are made daily through electronic means, mostly through mobile devices. (Brazilian Interviewee number 8, 2023)

It is important to emphasise that in this relationship between mobile devices and journalists, there is no technological determinism. The tools are not central to the process but are integral to it in a context where the ambience of deep mediatisation alters the social fabric and the prevailing practices and processes in our society.

In summary, we observe a shift from remote newsrooms to online environments, which we understand here as mediatised editorial offices. In this process, there is a very close relationship between devices and professionals due to the ease and mobility that this connection brings to work relationships. However, this proximity is not always beneficial to the professionals, causing, in a way, a dependency.

b) The Swedish Corpus

In the Swedish methodological process, all seven interviewees were questioned in person in the city of Stockholm. One of the initial highlights is how mobile devices have made journalism instantaneous and fast. According to Swedish Interviewee 1, for example, journalism is more agile, and the use of mobile phones facilitates this dynamic.

> The way we do journalism is faster now. Speed has always been present, especially in news agencies, but now it's everywhere. I mean, live reporting, live ac-

> counts. When I started, there were no mobile phones. The only ones who had a cellphone in the late '80s were newspaper photographers, and they had it in their cars. (Swedish Interviewee number 1, 2023)

Smartphones also play a supportive role in everyday practices. Swedish Interviewee number 2, for example, emphasises that all the research conducted in their work is done using mobile devices. Additionally, they also highlight the importance of social media in their professional activities.

> When I worked online, I used my smartphone to see how it looked (the reports) on the app because when we talk about online, we don't produce just for the website but also for the app. In terms of my current radio work, the phone is very important, I would say, because I'm working on the screen with my computer, but if I have to do a quick research on topics, I use my phone. I also use it for social media, of course, where many issues are discussed or even raised through social networks. So, I do that with my phone. Instagram, Twitter. This is my device of choice. (Swedish Interviewee number 2, 2023)

Swedish Interviewee number 3 highlights another point that prompts us to reflect on changes in journalistic practices and processes: understanding that journalism now needs to cater to various formats of text and video and adapt to multiple types of technological platforms.

> I think it's about reaching the reader through the phone or even a desktop. That's the big change, being where the readers are. The majority of our readers are on mobile phones. (Swedish Interviewee number 3, 2023)

The Social Media Editor at *Sveriges Radio*, Interviewee number 4, emphasises the difficulty in explaining to colleagues the importance of considering the creation of content that will be consumed on mobile devices, such as Instagram stories.

> We have been putting in place, and reporters know that they have to produce some videos or photos for us to use in the coming days. They have to learn a way to do this and its tricks, because when you do radio, it's very 'here and now,' but you have to be more timeless. It has been complicated to explain to reporters why this is important, and why we are doing this. Because when they look at themselves on Instagram, they get used to it and kind of like it, and that's a good portfolio for them. (Swedish Interviewee number 4, 2023)

What is perceived, therefore, is a multimedia journalist who must produce and think about content for various media niches: radio, television, Internet, social networks, etc. They use social networks as a research tool and metric for the

results published by the newspapers. What matters in this article, however, is to go beyond journalistic practice for more than one media. We need to understand what new layers are embedded in this complex game, which is not only technological but also changes social aspects of journalism.

At first glance, the presence of journalism newsrooms that extend to the virtual environment is noteworthy, just like in the Brazilian case; they are not restricted to a physical space. All interviewees stated that their newsrooms have groups/tools that can be accessed virtually. Similar to Brazil, one of the factors that accelerated the process of using newsroom spaces in apps was the COVID-19 pandemic. Swedish Interviewee number 5 emphasises that it is possible to work in a hybrid manner at *Dagens ETC*.

> We need to work two days in the physical newsroom, and the rest of the time, we can work from home or somewhere else. I think (… pause for a moment) We are using Skype, which I find very old school; we are using it as a means of communication with media and chats. So, maybe, in my case, in my work, we were already accustomed to communicating a lot through Skype and over the phone. (Swedish Interviewee number 5, 2023)

However, Swedish Interviewee number 3, also from *Dagens ETC,* emphasises that the Skype tool already existed in the newsroom before the pandemic, but its usage was amplified during the health crisis. According to the journalist, the space is used for interactions among the journalists in the newsroom.

> We have Skype as a tool all the time, even before the pandemic. Because we don't only have reporters in Stockholm, we have them in Helsingborg as well. So, we have always been somewhat hybrid. We have a big chat for everyone working for Dagens ETC, and we mainly talk about 'Oh, did you see this news' or 'There was a… what do you call it, I can find the word.' So, if you need the researcher's phone number. And, of course, a place for relaxation. (Swedish Interviewee number 3, 2023)

Hybrid work was also highlighted by Swedish Interviewee number 2. What emerges from the interviewee's experience, however, is a sensation similar to that highlighted by some Brazilian journalists: the feeling of being available all the time.

> Everything is fast, and you always have the time pressure. So, first, when I worked at home, it was super relaxing for me, and I felt much more focused. But, at the same time, people had to get used to communicating too. We use a lot of Microsoft Teams to communicate, and of course, I have the Microsoft Teams app to serve as a communication tool on my phone. So, I was available 24/7 out-

> side my working hours, which was different before because once you left the office, sometimes you got a call. (Swedish Interviewee number 2, 2023)

The experience of Swedish Interviewee number 6 follows the same line of thinking. According to the journalist, there is no room for disconnection. In other words, newsrooms on apps provide journalists with an inseparable connection where there is no longer space for rest.

> And the fact is that people also don't stop using the Skype thread after working hours. So, it's a newsroom that's always running, and you just care, and I'm curious, like most journalists, so I check what people are writing late on a Saturday night. (Swedish Interviewee number 6, 2023)

Another point that arises from newsrooms on mobile apps is the social isolation of journalists themselves. Despite being connected 24 hours, journalists generally feel that there has been a shift in social relationships towards distance. There is not a greater closeness among them, and the interactive devices in the newsrooms are reconfigured.

> Before the pandemic, I worked at a local newspaper, and in that job, I was constantly talking to people in the neighbourhood and so on, but it closed down and became a completely different type of work where we could only call whoever was in our story. I started here during the pandemic, and that was also very difficult because I couldn't see my colleagues and couldn't make friends. So, it was mainly a conversation between me and my closest boss and the morning meeting. Then I became much more isolated, I would say. (Swedish Interviewee number 6, 2023)

Within social relationships in journalism newsrooms on apps, Swedish Interviewee number 7 emphasises that among the main differences is the lack of personal and direct communication with other members of the newsroom. The professional notes that there is a difference between relationships in online and offline spaces.

> I mean, in my old job, I was at a newspaper with only six or seven journalists, and almost all the work was done at home, so I'm used to working on it, although I really don't like it. I mean, it's a completely different thing to talk to your editor, for example, in real life; you can hear advice, for example. (Swedish Interviewee number 7, 2023)

A debate emerges from Derrick de Kerckhove's (2015) ideas: if we are online extensions of our offline world, why do relationships in the online world not unfold in the same way? Consequently, we observe an impact on social rela-

tionships within journalism newsrooms. The 24/7 connection through mobile devices fails to meet the social and discursive demands of journalism newsrooms. Journalism, fundamentally a collaborative effort, appears to be affected by the deterritorialisation of spaces.

To summarise, the interviews reveal that symbiotic relationships between journalists and mobile devices offer not only speed in journalistic practice but also a phenomenon of hybrid journalism newsrooms existing in physical and virtual spaces, facilitated by applications like Microsoft Teams or Skype. In this context, mediatisation is not just an ambience but a structural aspect influencing social practices and processes embedded in journalistic routines. This alteration in meanings and discourses is a result of the 24-hour connection of professionals. Moreover, a current psychosomatic crisis seems evident, stemming from constant connectivity and the need to stay updated through social media and online newsroom applications.

Understanding Symbiosis in Journalism as a Global Phenomenon and Journalistic Reconfigurations in a Mediatised Environment

After analysing interviews from two distinct scenarios, the empirical findings underscore the necessity of first addressing how this new environment, shaped by symbiotic relationships, impacts the lives and daily routines of professionals.

As a researcher and journalist, it is crucial to acknowledge that colleagues worldwide work continuously due to the imperative to stay connected and informed about ongoing events. This connection, characterised by what we define as symbiosis, brings positive aspects such as deterritorialised spaces, infinite connections, extensions of ourselves into virtual environments, etc. However, it is not possible to trivialise the sensations described by journalists during the interviews. There is an urgency in this matter that indicates a need for further research on the topic.

From the initial focus, it is evident that newsrooms worldwide are undergoing a process of transitioning from physical spaces to virtual spaces. Symbiotic relationships and the proximity of individuals to their devices, combined with the mediatised logic in this process, result in what we will define here as mediatised newsrooms.

The phenomenon is visible in both cases. While in Brazil, newsrooms have shifted to platforms like WhatsApp, Swedish newsrooms make use of platforms like Skype and Microsoft Teams. Nevertheless, it was observed through the interviews that professionals have these platforms' applications on their mobile devices, creating connections that go beyond the workday, as all three platforms are available for mobile devices.

In summary, mobile devices not only reshape journalistic practices in terms of format and agility but also affect the work environment itself, subverting the logic we were accustomed to with physical spaces and in-person connections, leading to dependence and the need for a connection that is indeed symbiotic. In this bond, one element appropriates the other in logic that can cause, for example, physical and mental problems. It is evident, therefore, that social fabric and existing norms are altered and come under tension. As mentioned above, there is a need to delve into how symbiosis impacts the life of journalists.

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Circulating the Most Beloved Towel in Brazil: Pabllo Vittar's Drag Performativity Between Politics and Entertainment

Rodrigo Duarte Bueno de Godoi[1] & *Ana Paula da Rosa*[2];[3]

Introduction

The intersection between different fields is a characteristic of society in mediatisation. This is because as logics of mediatisation (Braga 2012) increasingly become part of social practices, they determine how we act, live, and perform in society. In this sense, communicational processes become central in the intertwining of seemingly unthinkable fields, such as politics and entertainment. In this text, we propose to observe the overflow of boundaries between fields, considering a music concert not only as a performative space but also as a space where social discourses are inscribed, extending beyond what happens on stage during the event. We refer to a media practice of an artist that takes on a political connotation and, as a result, begins to engage in interactional circuits. The imagery that emerges in this context, particularly the issue of images, stands out as an important element in the contestation of meanings at play.

With this in mind, this article aims to lead a discussion on the circulation of meanings, especially the political dispute that took place in Brazil during the 2022 general elections, around the portrait of former president and presidential candidate Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. This product was transformed into a product – a towel – that became a flag during the performance of the drag queen Pabllo Vittar at the LollaPalooza Brazil festival in the same year. The focus is on understanding this intersection between the artistic and the political, and especially what this episode reveals about an ongoing process, seen in different

[1] Doctoral student in Communication Sciences at Universidade Vale dos Sinos (UNISINOS), São Leopoldo, Brazil. Guest doctoral student at Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, 2023–24.

[2] Professor and Program Coordinator in the Postgraduate Program in Communication Sciences at Universidade Vale dos Sinos (UNISINOS), São Leopoldo, Brazil, and is the leader of the research group *Laboratory of Circulation, Image, and mediatisation* (LACIM) in the same institution. In 2022, she worked as a visiting professor at Sördetörn University through Capes/STINT.

[3] Paper presented at the *V International Seminar on mediatisation and Social Processes*, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Santa Maria, Brazil, 2023.

countries, whether in Latin America or Europe, involving the shift of political debates to performative spaces of concerts and music events. Music has always been a locus of debate and tension, whether in lyrics, music videos, or musical tributes in historical political turning points. However, what we identify as something recent, indicating the deepening of the social mediatisation process, is artists starting to produce political expressions during their concerts and digital networks simultaneously. On one hand, they take an explicit political position, which is not new. On the other hand, they develop performances about and with political elements, shifting social debates to the sphere of media circulation, far beyond the duration of a concert or the musical performance itself. Thus, the discussion ceases to be about the musical spectacle and becomes centred on the tensioning of the legality of actions and contact strategies activated by different actors. To some extent, the artist's performance extends as an invitation to performativity within and outside digital networks, through appropriations and reappropriations.

It is important to note that this text is linked to the mediatisation approach, considering the Latin American perspective of communication studies that locates the issue around the transformations of social practices based on mediatisation logics (Braga, 2015). This involves social experiments that incorporate media logic to create new forms of interaction and affect. We think of mediatisation as a semio–anthropological process (Verón, 2014) where the circulation of meanings reveals flows that transcend the performances themselves, thus complicating the intersection of media and social debates. While we adopt a Brazilian empirical case, this approach can be considered for other observable empirical material that emerges from intersections of music and politics.

A Developing Case: "Brazil's Dearest Towel"

On 25 March, 2022, the first day of Lollapalooza music festival, one of Brazil's largest music festivals in Brazil, a particular incident caught the attention of the entire Brazilian media. In the final 40 seconds of drag queen Pabllo Vittar's performance, an event forcefully sparked discussions on digital platforms and in the press. After performing her set, Vittar, along with her dancers, paid homage to the audience and passionately exclaimed "Fora Bolsonaro" (Out with Bolsonaro) across the 600,000 m^2 festival venue, normally used for Formula 1 racing in São Paulo, Brazil. Following this, Vittar exited the stage towards the audience and, in what resembled an open corridor among spectators, she came across a towel printed with former president and Workers' Party (PT) presidential candidate Lula da Silva's portrait held by a fan. Vittar grabbed the towel and paraded with it while being cheered on by the audience.

Figure 1 – Pabllo Vittar lifting the towel with Lula da Silva's portrait during her concert. Source: Rodrigues (2022).

The moment when the drag queen held the towel captured the interest of multiple news websites and sparked reactions from various individuals on social media. Media coverage heightened the circulation of information and broadened the channels through which various reactions to the singer's actions spread. The impact of the event, which initially unfolded in the physical space of the festival, resonated initially in the digital realm. Numerous profiles and webpages shared screenshots of Vittar running with the raised towel showing how the physical and performative space of the concert transformed into media performativity.

As images of Vittar's *performative act* (Schechner 2017), featuring the raised red towel adorned with Lula da Silva's face, spread across different platforms, they quickly sparked controversy about artists' rights to express political views during the event. Its circulation triggered a series of responses from political actors and social institutions. One day after the concert, lawyers from then president Jari Bolsonaro's[4] Liberal Party (PL) filed an injunction with the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court (TSE). The aim was not only to notify the event about inappropriate conduct by the artists but also to prohibit future political manifestations in similar events. According to the lawyers, the act was characterised as electoral propaganda in violation of legal provisions[5].

[4] And one of the names who would be, months later, a direct political opponent of Lula in the elections of the same year.

[5] The fine for non-compliance with the injunction, endorsed by the Superior Electoral Court, could reach R$ 25,000 for the festival organisers (Lima, 2022).

Figure 2 – Example of images of Pabllo Vittar holding the red towel with Lula da Silva's portrait that circulated on social media platforms. Source: @RuthVenceremos, 2022.

On the second day of the festival, on 26 March, other artists used similar political expressions. Singers such as Silva, Jão, and rapper Emicida were among those who used the space to criticise President Jair Bolsonaro, despite the news already circulating about the TSE injunction (Miltão and Arreguy 2022, Online). Drag queen Glória Groove, who performed on the third day of the event, wore an outfit with the number 13 printed on the back, the number known to identify with Lula da Silva's candidate number on election ballots. Before singing one of her songs, she said:

> Lolla, you know, this afternoon before coming here, I found myself thinking the following: did we go back in time? Is this really what's happening? I mean, do they want to silence us, is that it? Censorship in 2022 is f***ed up. Bolsonaro out. (Lady Leste 2022, Online. Author's translation.)

Groove's speech, along with other artists' remarks during the same event, which referenced the injunction and freedom of expression on stage, indicated that the significance introduced and disseminated by Vittar's performance on the first day was reverberating within the physical setting of the event once again.

This indicated a kind of intra-media circulation, that is, the circulation of media responses within the festival itself. On digital platforms, the hashtag #lulapalooza, cleverly blending the festival name "Lollapalooza" with "Lula," cataloged content and creations from diverse social participants discussing the event, making it relevant even for those who weren't physically there.

In the months following Lollapalooza, towels with the same print appeared in various social spaces, highlighting how the meanings of the initial act and the image of the towel itself gained traction in circulation (Rosa 2019). Two examples are worth mentioning. One example involves a young individual who, upon noticing they were being filmed during a live broadcast for RJTV, Rede Globo's local television affiliate in Rio de Janeiro, chose to hold up a towel with the same print towards the camera while enjoying a sunny day at the beach (Fortes 2022) (Figure 3). The second example is a concert by singer Luisa Sonza in the city of João Pessoa, in Northeastern Brazil months later in May 2022. There, Sonza receives a towel from a fan and raises it on stage to the sound of cheers of "Lula" from the audience (Ninja 2022). Both images spread virally across digital platforms and in various other media circuits, where the image of the towel regained visibility (Figure 4).


Pesquisas eleitorais: como funcionam e por que nem sempre acertam resultado final

Mariana Schreiber - @marischreiber
Da BBC News Brasil em Brasília

29 julho 2022

Figures 3 and 4 – Adherence of the image in circulation. Source: Trezena (2022, Online); Schreiber (2022, Online).

In general, we propose to observe the mediatisation operations of social actors who were on site producing images – from the event organisers who recorded and broadcasted the concert, cable television channels (Multishow and BIS), to news portals reporting the event and its reverberations. We also look at practices of appropriation of these images by social actors in service of *mediatic action* (Rosa 2016). The goal is to try to reconstruct and understand the circuit

ambience that unfolds from Pabllo Vittar's performance and its multiple aggregations.

In this regard, two gestures are mobilised for the construction of the case. Initially, we succinctly outline a mediatic biography of Pabllo Vittar and provide a brief notion about music festivals such as Lollapalooza, which are central to the episode. This mediatic biography allows us to perceive how political dimensions intersect with the artist's and the festival's trajectories. Furthermore, we collect empirical data comprising media content accessible on digital platforms and news portals generated during and related to the event and assess their impacts. The corpus of reference materials for analysis consists of research on the social media site Twitter (now X) and the online video platform YouTube, along with highly visible news portals. This gesture of following the traces of circulation allows us to map an ambient circuit and, more than that, investigate the relationships at play in the production of meanings between social fields (Braga 2012).

The goal is to reconstruct the case from reference materials and locate the process of circulation of meaning in these flows. As a mediatised case (Weschenfelder 2019), we analyse the complexity of relationships based on three axes: performance, social performativity, and the operative image. From these empirical movements, we delve into theoretical inferential movements that focus specifically on debates about concepts of mediatisation logics and social practices transformed by mediatisation (Braga 2012; Couldry and Hepp 2020, Godoi 2020); circulation of meanings (Fausto Neto 2013; Rosa 2019); image as an operation (Didi Huberman 2012; Rosa 2020), and performance (Schechner 2017; Langdon 2006; Bauman 1990; Amaral, Soares and Poliavanov 2018), among others.

Pabllo Vittar and Lollapalooza: the Political Dimension in the Artist's Career and in the Festival

The twins Phabullo and Phamella were born on 1 November 1993 in Maranhão, in Northeastern Brazil. During their childhood, they moved between several small cities in the interior of the region, along with two sisters and their mother, Verônica Rodrigues, a nurse. In interviews, Phabullo[6], who later became Pabllo, recounts being a victim of bullying during his school years due to being perceived as feminine due to their high-pitched voice (Gsoutello 2021).

[6] Phabullo is the name of the person behind the persona. Its the 'out of drag' name of Pabllo.

Phabullo attended classical ballet and jazz classes during their childhood, and as a teenager fell in love with music and discovered the art of drag through television, which changed their destiny forever. By watching RuPaul's famous TV show *Drag Race*, Phabullo discovered a new world of possibilities and understood that they could be a drag queen artist. At age 17, they "got into drag" for the first time, embodying Pabllo Knowles, a drag artist inspired by the American singer Beyoncé Knowles (Gsoutello 2021).

In 2015, already known as Pabllo Vittar, the song "Open Bar" would be a foundational milestone in their career as a singer. The song is a reinterpretation of "Lean On" by the American trio Major Lazer and quickly gained views on YouTube and Spotify, helping to promote Pabllo Vittar's name in the music industry. Encouraged by the success, they recorded four more reinterpretations of North American hit songs, which were later removed from streaming platforms due to copyright issues, except for "Open Bar", which was recognised by the original trio who granted permission for its release, possibly due to its success (Gsoutello 2021).

Despite their removal from social media platforms, the success of the released songs was confirmed in 120 live shows of the *Open Bar* tour, with performances throughout Brazil in 2016. The drag queen's charisma combined with rising popularity served as a starting point for Vittar to be invited to perform in television programs such as *Amor e Sexo*, broadcast on Rede Globo open TV channel, the main television network in Brazil (Gsoutello 2021; Rocha 2017).

Vittar's debut album *Vai Passar Mal*, was released in 2017 and marks a turning point in her media ascension. Having reached national audiences, the drag queen's songs were among the most listened to on the radio and achieved significant numbers of views on video and music streaming platforms. Subsequent music albums consolidated her musical career and expanded the projection of the artist's celebrated performances.

During their performance at Lollapalooza Brazil in March 2022, when Vittar raised the towel featuring Lula da Silva's portrait, it wasn't particularly unexpected, given the singer's history of making political statements in public – whether explicitly mentioning Lula da Silva or expressing opposition to President Jair Bolsonaro. In an interview months after the event, Vittar commented on the event:

> Firstly, I think it's not only important for artists but beyond that, for humans in general, to take a stance and have empathy, understanding that we live diverse lives, without a standard or mould for everyone in our country. I've experienced many things in my life and have been greatly helped by Lula's government, by "paizinho" [a term of endearment for Lula], and I've always taken a stand. There,

> at Lollapalooza, I was so happy to be at the event, on stage, performing the show, and when I saw the towel, I gathered even more energy, as it was an election year, and… truly, I couldn't hold back. But I think it's very important for us to take a stand and use our voices to defend causes that truly matter. It's great to post looks, it's great to post bikini photos on our Instagram, but sometimes we have to look beyond ourselves, you know. (Vittar 2022, 27min25s. Translation of the author).

To understand the significance of Vittar's performative act, it is important to consider the significance of the physical space of the festival. Fléchet (2007) indicates that festivals are not exactly synonymous with parties. According to the author, despite introducing ruptures in everyday life and as a kind of public manifestation, festivals occur under specific circumstances in specific temporal and cultural contexts. Fléchet (2007) argues that the invention of the festival form, had decisive moments in the 1960s and 1970s, as "from the 1960s onwards, festivals played a prominent role in intensifying musical flows and, more generally, in what we commonly call cultural globalisation" (2007: 268). Similarly, political demonstrations at festivals such as Monterrey (1967), *Woodstock* (1969), and *Sunbury Pop Festival* (1972), mobilised by private initiatives, and the *Festival Mundial das Artes Negas*, organised by popular initiatives, were marked by the strength of expressions, especially the latter, which valued black artists (Fléchet 2007).

In this sense, even if not strategically planned, Vittar's performative act in the 2022 edition of LollaPalooza carries something of the culture of music festivals, which is the political dimension present in popular manifestations. These contextual conditions are important to consider how flows of circulation are triggered in which Vittar's images of them raising the towel will circulate.

The Body of the Face: the Towel in Circulation

The towel, as an everyday object and a household item does not usually occupy a place of media visibility. There are rare situations where we observe something so commonplace being infused with such a strong symbolic dimension as in this case study, when functionality gives way to what the object represents. In this regard, the object's purpose is no longer under scrutiny; rather, its symbolic significance is what is being considered. In Vittar's performative act, the towel printed with Lula da Silva's face is no longer just a towel with commodity value. It becomes a political artefact to be exhibited on digital platforms, in the windows of homes and in street mobilisations – spaces that somehow imply dimensions of circulation and, consequently, visibility.

Figures: 5, 6, and 7 – Source: author's collection (5 and 6) and (7) @ComiteLula (2022).

Peruzzolo (1998) points out that "a 'body' is a social and cultural construction, whose representation circulates within the group, invested with a multiplicity of meanings" (1998: 17). From this perspective, the towel is the physical support of the image of Lula da Silva's face which is put into circulation. This body enters urban spaces by being displayed on balconies and windows of buildings and houses across the country, and as such becomes a product that circulates based on the logic of digital spaces. In this sense, circuits are developed through interactions based not only on the meanings produced about the given object but also on the towel body itself that circulates within and outside the media.

José Luiz Braga (2012) proposes an interactional perspective on the circulation process, indicating that in this space, where there are complex games of presenting and recognising discourses (Braga 2012, apud Fausto Neto 2010), there is an effort to always "keep a product or comment in constant flow forward". From this perspective, the circulating product is not a starting point for the flow, but an endpoint, as its circulation results from a series of operations, processes, and strategies that make the object circulate.[7] However, in this case, the towel as a body also circulates. It is not a circulation in terms of meaning but of the object-body itself that moves. This object-body becomes loaded with

[7] More succinctly, the author presents the proposition as follows: "strictly speaking, it is not 'the product' that circulates – but it encounters a circulation system in which it becomes viable and to which it contributes" (Braga 2012: 41).

symbolic value as it leaves the space of domestic use and goes to the public sphere of cities, street protests, and political mobilisations in general.

The symbolic body of the towel-object is to some extent the body of the presidential candidate himself. Lula da Silva's face with a reserved smile and a serene gaze is the result of investments in meaning from various logic and social spaces. The way it circulates, in physical, digital, and hegemonic media spaces, indicates that the displacement of this object occurs through flows that intensify over various temporalities inaugurated in Pabllo Vittar's performance at *Lollapalooza,* but also marked by the rapid spread of digital networks and the context of political intensification as electoral campaigns advanced through that year.

Even though the domestic use of the towel object occurs in a private sphere given its functionality, the towel body, when exposed and inscribed in processes of visibility, breaks with what is in the private realm and becomes reterritorialised in public spaces. The aim is not only to make the political candidate's image visible to potential supporters but also to generate meaningful effects of identification with those who are already aligned with the candidate. In other words, the presence of this body, whether in digital or physical spaces, claims both the public testimony of the existence of other bodies denied during Jair Bolsonaro's government, who symbolically feel represented by this towel-body and also highlights the materialisation of social articulations cut across by communication processes, thus generating responses and therefore acting on the social context.

When the Image Acts: the Image-circuit of Lula da Silva's Face

We understand the images of the towel with Lula da Silva's portrait as agents of interactional circuits. By becoming autonomous from the initial event (Pabllo Vittar's performance at LollaPalooza), the images of the towel – or the towel itself as an image – become the event itself, to the extent that interactional processes are articulated from the image (Rosa 2017; 2017b; 2020).

Rosa (2020) identifies, based on images produced during political and social crises in Syria in 2018, that image circuits "are a kind of trigger for new circulations and tensions in multiple media and devices. The circuit-image operation highlights the power of the web as access, but also the need for a tactical elaboration of the use of the medium as an interactional device" (2020: 15). This perception aligns with what we have noticed about the images of the towel ever since, even when they trigger processes outside the media, they are reinscribed in these spaces due to their valuation power.

Figure 8 – Image of the towel turned into an informal electoral poll dubbed "DataTowel", like a data gathering device, by a street market vendor. Source: authors' collection (2023).

The "DataTowel" (Figure 8), an informal electoral poll that appropriates official voter intention polls conducted by Datafolha, a polling institute owned by one of Brazil's largest media conglomerates Folha de S.Paulo, gives us some clues about how this "image circuit" is constituted. Initially, the consumption of the towel as a product sold on the streets by street market vendors reveals a social interest in the meanings produced about the towel body rather than its functionality. In this sense, one operation of this image circuit is to activate sectors of the market that perceive a commercial interest in generating capital based on

what circulates socially with noticeable intensity. On the other hand, even when triggering interactional processes that are not exactly of a mediatic nature, the towel-body ends up being inscribed in the form of images in digital spaces. The exposure of a "towel sales scoreboard" below the towel (Figure 8) is an operation aimed at circulation. In other words, a production that aims to become a topic of discussion in digital spaces.

Figures 9 and 10 – Image-circuit in circulation on Twitter. Source: Left: @paulobetti3 (2022); Right: @Lulaverso (2022).

Rosa (2019b) points out that circulating images gain power when they trigger flows of meaning production. In this case study, we notice that before being inscribed in digital spaces, the image circuit of the towel articulates interactional processes in physical spaces where it is visible. Passersby who photograph the towel, or at least comment on its display on windows, inaugurate interactional flows and carry forward meanings produced about them. Similarly, the visual records of the towel decorating part of the cityscape aim to make visible and trigger social discussions about the meanings carried forward by this towel-body.

Final Comments

The image of the towel, which initially gained visibility in the social space of a music event, became inscribed in digital spaces and hegemonic media in an intensive process of circulation and interactional processes. It quickly returned to the festival space but extended beyond it in the following months with its

meanings deepened by the socio-political context of Brazilian general elections in 2022. Symbolic operations of appropriation and production in service of media action (Rosa 2019) make the life of this image distant, while the towel body circulates in physical spaces.

Throughout Brazil, the towel body circulated in several cities. The object, which initially has the value of domestic use, became invested with meanings and acquired valuation in circulation and entered multiple spaces of visibility. While on the streets the towel-body triggered more conversational interaction processes, in media spaces the image stimulated countless flows and digital productions by diverse social actors.

Thus, it is important to consider that Vittar's performance with the towel leaked far beyond the festival stage. Indeed, we identify the inability to manage or stop the continuous flow of production and meaning as a mark of mediatisation. The drag queen's performance, embodying the full performativity of the show where her body and ideas serve as symbols of resistance, moves the political discourse into a cultural arena that is increasingly becoming a focal point of critical examination: the concert stage. Despite the numerous recent music events in Brazil where political themes have been prevalent on stage and in speeches – where artists have frequently voiced their political and personal opinions – the issue at hand is not that. Instead, it's about what extends beyond the concert itself; it marks just the start of an ongoing cycle characterised by layers of appropriations and reappropriations. In this cycle, the image of the initial performative act gains strength as it becomes embroiled in the battle over meanings. Rather, the key is to think of the phenomenon in terms of operations as such: a) the drag artist performs for visibility and creates an image; b) social actors enter the political debate by reinscribing this image in their media discursive spaces; c) journalistic institutions address the events; d) political actors take the towel-object well into the electoral campaign, and e) on the streets, the towel-object becomes an element of desire and dispute, serving as both a billboard, protest banner, campaign poster, body cover, and a flag of resistance. What does this ensemble of operations associated with the Brazilian experience of meaning circulation emphasise? Perhaps nothing escapes mediatisation, as both politics and entertainment are intensely interwoven by communication through the agency of multiple actors.

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IV
Experiences

Strangers in the House: Hospitality, Internationalisation, and Mediatisation at a Crossroads

Isabel Löfgren[1]

Hosting at a Crossroads

Exú, a prominent deity in Afro–Brazilian religious traditions such as Candomblé and Umbanda, occupies a unique and multifaceted role as the *Orixá* (from Yorubá = deity) of communication. Having a mercurial nature, Exú is known as a trickster who benevolently tests the faith of practitioners through puns and riddles. Exú also mediates between the world of the living and the divine and is closely associated with crossroads, symbolic intersections where diverse energies meet. As a guardian of these meeting points, Exú ensures the seamless flow of communication between different realms.

When Göran Bolin asked me to be a Research Coordinator for the Capes-STINT research exchange (2019–2023) on behalf of the Media and Communications Department at Södertörn University, I recognised it as an invitation for a journey into a realm both familiar and unfamiliar. I am a Brazilian with an academic career in Sweden, and a Swede who did all her studies in Brazil and abroad, making me both a "native" and a "stranger" in both countries. While I am a native speaker of both languages and well-versed in both cultures and their histories, in the beginning, I was less familiar with the distinct approaches to mediatisation research by scholars from either country. Finding myself at the crossroads of Swedish and Brazilian cultural and academic *lifeworlds*[2] (Husserl 1982), I summoned the spirit of Exú to guide me through this experience.

[1] Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication Studies, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, and Research Coordinator of the Capes-STINT research exchange, 2019–2023.

[2] Edmond Husserl's (1859–1938) notion of lifeworld (German: "Lebenswelt") refers to the pre-epistemological, everyday world of human experience – the world as it is immediately given to consciousness. The lifeworld is the background against which all experiences and meanings unfold. See Husserl, E. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*. The Hague: Springer Dordrecht, 1982; also, Birnbaum, D. *The Hospitality of Presence: Problems of Otherness in Husserl's Phenomenology***.** London: Sternberg Press, 2008.

Coordinating a mobility exchange uniting Nordic and Latin American perspectives on mediatisation research, however, required more than translating and mediating between vastly different cultures and distinct theoretical frameworks and epistemologies. As my role grew into becoming a facilitator of research residencies for Brazilian mediatisation scholars coming to Sweden, I realised that the potential of research exchange often exceeds institutional boundaries and requires an intersubjective dimension which is more difficult to quantify and systematise. From a host's perspective, mobility programs entail a large degree of personal investment and affective labour that includes creating a sense of belonging to a "foreign" academic community through mediation, facilitation, and enabling long-term dialogue and relationships built through everyday hospitable acts. To understand this better, I propose to frame research mobility and internationalisation work through a communicational approach to the philosophy of hospitality (Lévinas 1969, 1999; Derrida 1997, 1999, 2001; Flusser 2002). This allows us to highlight aspects that are not always readily apparent in the academic outcomes resulting from research exchange such as the chapters in this collection, and allows us to focus on modes of immaterial and affective collaboration as well as structural issues such as gendered, racialised, linguistic and epistemic inequalities, which are frequently disregarded in discourses of academic internationalisation (Morley et al. 2021). I contend that a language of hospitality helps to navigate and untangle these inequalities at a crossroads that acts as a common ground (Sodré 2014) for dialogue and scientific knowledge co-creation.

Meeting at the crossroads: From Digital to Physical Presence

The Capes-STINT research exchange commenced right at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, presenting formidable challenges to researcher mobility which lay at the core of the project. Due to the planetary shutdown, our initial interactions took place exclusively online, in a mediatised manner. We met through email, WhatsApp, and videoconferencing during various program events such as research exchange seminars ("Jornadas") and the conference *Midiaticom – IV International Seminar on Mediatisation and Social Processes*[3] held entirely online in late 2020.

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[3] *Midiaticom* is a biennial conference on mediatisation research organised by Professor Jairo Ferreira (UNISINOS-UFSM – and who also served as the Brazilian director of the Capes-STINT project. See the conference website at: https://www.midiaticom.org/).

In that fully digitised environment, new modes of interaction had to be improvised. Greetings like "Hej!" or "Como vai?" were replaced by awkward introductions like "Can you hear me?" relating to technical aspects of videoconferencing – a hallmark of nearly all academic interactions during that period. The complexity of academic and cultural exchange in online mediums was further exacerbated by illness, technical challenges, time differences, communication breakdowns, and translation issues. We often grappled with multiple languages being spoken in the same room, frequently requiring professional translation services. To untangle this tower of Babel in more informal situations, I often found myself stepping in as a "cultural translator" across different working cultures and facilitating communication between team members in various communication channels. Despite these hurdles, this period allowed for the establishment of personal connections among team members which created a sense of familiarity between the Swedish and Brazilian teams, and allowed for the scientific knowledge co-creation processes that would unfold over the next few years.

When the actual international mobility exchange began in 2022 as post-pandemic travel was reinstated, we already knew each other fairly well. Between 2022 and 2024, the mobility program finally materialised the "research missions" of Brazilian communication scholars from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) and UNISINOS flying to Sweden for stays between two weeks and ten months. We hosted eight guest researchers, including visiting Professors Ada C. Silveira Machado, Viviane Borelli, and Aline Roes Dalmolin from UFSM, and Ana Paula da Rosa from UNISINOS; post-doctoral researcher Mauricio Fanfa (UFSM); and doctoral students Camila Hartmann (UFSM), Márcio Morrison and Rodrigo Duarte (UNISINOS). That year, however, presented new geopolitical challenges such as the beginning of the current phase of the Russia–Ukraine War. This affected the visa acquisition process for Brazilian researchers for travel to Sweden causing significant and often costly delays before arrival. In mid–2023, specific events concerning the drawn–out process of Sweden's NATO application status caused increased security threats to the country, leading to additional border controls and adding further delays in visa applications and entry processes.

Our role as the Swedish hosts involved assisting our visitors in travel and visa arrangements, providing infrastructure for their work in our department, establishing local connections to the Swedish media research environment, and organising their participation in seminars and other activities. Beyond practical matters, however, one major task was to help our guests settle in and navigate uncharted territory as none of our guests had been to Sweden before. Moving abroad was especially challenging for some of the younger "academic

migrants" who experienced travel abroad for the first time. Also, linguistic inequalities came to the fore. In Sweden, using English as a primary language for work and daily communication by non-native speakers, particularly those accustomed to Portuguese, presented both a challenge and an opportunity for learning. Moreover, it was also important to introduce our guests to Sweden's cultural, historical, technological, and academic lifeworlds, and not least the Nordic weather.

As each researcher kept arriving, I helped translate the local context into terms familiar to a Brazilian mindset, from practical matters such as where to find *erva mate*[4] in local markets, to discussing historical turning points in Swedish and Brazilian general elections[5], and helping to deal with homesickness or the loss of loved ones at home. In return, their impressions of Swedish life from an "academic migrant's" perspective made me perceive my familiar environment with new eyes. As such, I was frequently confronted with the inherent dilemmas of the host-guest relationship. That is, meeting the "other" in my home country of Sweden as a native Swede, while simultaneously fully identifying with our Brazilian guests for whom Sweden was entirely unfamiliar at first, and mediating between these two worlds.

From Internationalisation to Hospitality

Södertörn University (n.d.) defines internationalisation in terms of contracts of academic exchange with universities overseas, the integration of an international, intercultural, or global dimension in education, and the use of English as an academic *lingua franca* in order to increase the quality of teaching and research. Even though mutual agreements, epistemological exchange, and language are essential structures for long-term internationalisation efforts to happen, my experience as a host of the Capes-STINT mobility exchange program reveals that internationalisation work sustains itself long-term through intersubjective relationships. These relationships are not always made evident in institutional internationalisation vocabularies due to their seemingly more performative and individualised character. I contend that these "sticky micropolitics" of "affective assemblages" (Morley et al. 2021) in

[4] A Brazilian herb used for "chimarrão", a form of tea popular in Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil where most of our visiting researchers come from.

[5] General elections were held in Brazil and Sweden between September and November 2022, leading to the co-authored article Löfgren, I., Rosa, A.P., Sartoretto, P. "Das práticas à circulação de sentidos: Olhares sobre a midiatização do processo eleitoral na Suécia e no Brasil". In: Borelli, V., Neto, F., Weschenfelder, A. (orgs.), *Midiatização, Pandemia e Eleições: Disputas e transformações nas discursividades contemporâneas*. João Pessoa: EDUEPB 2023: 347–372.

this intersubjective dimension can be better understood through a practice of care that requires a more human language and approach in institutionalised contexts. Therefore, in this chapter I propose to consider internationalisation within the framework of the philosophy of hospitality – the ethics of opening oneself to the Other – as conceptualised by Lévinas (1969, 1999), Derrida (1996, 1999, 2001), and Flusser (2002), particularly emphasising the ethical dimension in host-guest relationships.

Hospitality is a philosophical concept that serves to understand ethical dimensions in the relation between *self* and *other*, interiority and exteriority, encapsulated in the dynamic between hosts and guests, which Derrida (2001) defines as "the act of welcoming strangers". In his writings on ethics, Lévinas (1999), known for stressing the primacy and the priority of ethics over ontology and, indeed, over poetics, puts forth hospitality as a practice that can be traced to specific cultural norms, yet the phenomenon also embodies an ethics emphasising the encounter with the "other" in the world. If we consider internationalisation from the lens of hospitality, it is as much a practical engagement as an ethical commitment. It extends beyond mere institutionalisation and instrumentalisation by contracts and agreements to form a social and ethical bond between subjects that sheds light onto often overlooked human connections in academic cultures otherwise steered by status and productivity.

Drawing on Lévinas, Jacques Derrida (1996, 1999, 2001) wrote extensively on cosmopolitanism using hospitality both as a concept and a phenomenon to rethink a range of political and ethical situations. Hospitality is etymologically tied to *hospis* (Lat. "to care") and *hostis* (Lat. "hostage"), highlighting its dual nature. The shift from *hospis* to *hostis* suggests a fragile boundary: disregarding hospitality and pushing limits is a transgression, while maintaining equilibrium in the guest-host dynamic becomes the fundamental engagement with the external world. However, this inherently asymmetrical relationship is often conditional to laws and cultural norms that regulate host-guest relationships on several scales, from cultural rituals (i.e. receiving guests in one's private home), to policies of rights of stay (i.e. visa and asylum applications), and laws between sovereign states (See a critique of Kant's cosmopolitan rights in Nussbaum 1997). Derrida (2001) advances a critique of cosmopolitanism toward fulfilling the desire for an unfettered movement across borders, aiming to dissolve borders themselves. As such, he introduces the concept of unconditional hospitality, where removing conditionalities unveils a primal care for others, reminding of Lévinas for whom hospitality acts as a foundational philosophy that precedes utility, virtue, and duty (Bergo 2019).

Lévinas (1969) situates this "first philosophy" in the physical face-to-face encounter with the Other, which becomes a communicative act of recognition

where we, when faced with the irreducible and singular presence of the Other become infinitely responsible for *one-another*. Differently than connecting the face or the self with identity, Lévinas uses the encounter to initiate a philosophy of alterity. In other words, one's humanity can only be learned from recognising humanity in the Other and by hosting the Other – in a horizon of unconditional, radical hospitality for ethical being.

The face-to-face encounter has been a recurring trope in media studies where it is often used to illustrate this primal intersection in such a way that it precedes communication itself, or as an example of an unmediated encounter that enables the construction of self in society. From a semio-anthropological approach, Eliseo Verón (2014: 16–17) writes that "the specificity of the face-to-face encounter is not its linearity, but the absence of external media phenomena (…) located in the same homogeneous time-space in oral cultures, located within a (pre-) history of communication", thus situating the possible origins of pre-mediatic communication. From a sociological viewpoint, Erving Goffman (1967) introduced the concept of "face" as a portrayal of oneself, shaped by the norms and values of a particular society, and the context of social interactions that allow individuals to be perceived by others in certain ways in their immediate surroundings. In *Interaction Ritual*, Goffman's concept of the face-to-face encounter is "a condition for interaction, not an objective" (1967: 12), and describes several rituals that include acts of hospitality drawn primarily from anthropology. Even though the term "hospitality" is not specifically mentioned in his texts, he refers to the ethical dimension between hosts and guests in terms of "etiquette" embedded in "rituals" of social interaction.

When revisiting both Verón and Goffman, I noticed that the body as a material entity tends to be overshadowed by their analytic perspectives. For example, Verón's (1997) concept of *circulation of meanings* refers to circulation as the relation between different grammars of production and grammars of recognition (Ferreira 2016: 200) that, in turn, trigger representational and interdiscursive relations between meanings as they are generated by and as they flow through media and technologies. In this semio-anthropological perspective, the concept of circulation serves to describe how meanings affect and are affected by social processes in a reflexive manner based on this intersubjective and mediated exchange. In order to understand how this intersubjective relationality could also take the body, or embodied experiences, into account within the logic of circulation, I turn to Vilém Flusser's media philosophical approach to hospitality, which I find useful in illuminating the trajectories of our visiting researchers and their dilemmas as "academic migrants".

Bodies and Meanings in Circulation

Vilém Flusser is a media philosopher who is often recognised for his contributions in understanding the relationship between culture and technology (See Flusser 2000), but who also addressed the phenomenon of exile, the ethics of hospitality, and the relationship between language and nomadism in his writings (Flusser 2002). As an exiled Jew in Brazil and later in France, Flusser explored how individuals in exile might adopt a more nomadic mindset that embraces the idea of constant movement and adaptation as a way of life both in terms of lived experience and intellectually – by associating dynamics of physical and territorial displacement to different communicational processes and theories of knowledge. His essays provide insights into the connection between displacement, identity, and cultural adaptation concerned with aspects of circulation between linguistics and languages, territories (physical and intellectual), and temporality. In his phenomenological approach, Flusser considers circulation as a collection of "gestures" and a way of entering different states of being in a nomadic movement (2002: 88). Flusser, like Lévinas, also recognises the importance of the *face*-to-*face* encounter as a primal contact zone in the philosophy of alterity, a situation where dialogue, which he considered as the foundation of language, can begin.

In "Taking Residence in Homelessness" (2002), Flusser describes how the process of cultural and symbolic deterritorialisation of the body of the migrant involves a temporary loss of self in a transitional state of white noise between their place of origin and their place of destination. This white noise hinders the migrant's ability to recognise signals and to communicate. When the migrant arrives in a new territory, in time these "new" codes become increasingly less scrambled, and he/she starts regaining the ability to decode new signals and regain the ability to communicate. However, the migrant, having suffered a temporary communicational homelessness, emerges from this process transformed by new relations and surroundings, as if born anew, or at least radically transformed by the experience. However, this process of transformation is not one-sided. As migrant bodies displace and circulate, they carry their *lifeworlds* with them and meet other bodies along the way. Upon meeting their hosts on arrival, the hosts also become transformed by their encounter and gain new insights about themselves and their surroundings. The face of the guest acts as a distorted mirror for the hosts, making them more self-aware inside their own home and lifting them from familiarity (2002: 91–93).

In "Exile and Creativity" (2002), Flusser provides an aesthetic dimension where the condition of becoming "un-housed" and "out of place" for both the guest and the host can stimulate new perspectives and creative insights, allow-

ing individuals to transcend traditional boundaries of thought and identities and emerge as "new" beings. Thus, the arrival of the migrant, or the Other, is something that transforms both the guests and the hosts. But given Flusser's overarching interest in the interrelationship between culture and technology, he also considered the role of communication technologies in the experience of exile and explored how media might serve as both a link to one's homeland and a means of connecting with a new cultural context (See Löfgren 2020: Chapter 2). I interpret Flusser's philosophy of exile as an embodied experience that serves as a metaphor for how bodies in circulation create meanings both within and outside of themselves, receiving meanings while producing meanings, and triggering their circulation as in Verón (1997), in several spaces, temporalities, and media logics along their path, and affecting the environment around them.

Narrating Face-to-Face Encounters

This chapter narrates the impressions of eight visiting Brazilian researchers during their research residencies in Sweden aiming to make visible living dimensions of the Capes-STINT research mobility, which are otherwise not readily accessible in the academic "products" of this exchange in the other chapters in this book. To use Ervin Goffman's (1959) theatrical terminology, while the scientific chapters in this collection represent the "frontstage" results of the exchange, this text is meant to give access to the "backstage" of the experiences of individual researchers in their role as "guests". Here, it is possible to see a work of *internationalisation-as-hospitality* as an inter-subjective and "in real life" practice stemming from face-to-face encounters that precede a mediatisation process.

The empirical material, or *corpus*, mobilised here includes fragments from individual reports by each visiting researcher, written after the conclusion of their residencies in Sweden in 2023 and 2024. Each account is written from each one's double persona as an "academic migrant" and as living subjects in a form of self-writing (Foucault 1994) resulting in texts that condense what Roger Silverstone (1999) calls the "texture of experience". I will use fragments of these individual reports submitted to the editors, which were initially intended to be published in their entirety in this publication. However, due to space limitations and the scientific nature of this publication, a late editorial decision arose for me to write *with* these texts in the proposed theoretical framework of hospitality, in which they take the role of guest-writers, and I, as a host-narrator.

I hesitate to categorise this approach as ethnography or any recognisable scientific method involving speculation or interpretation of findings. Here, there is

nothing to be "found", and insights will be presented as the text unfolds. Instead, I will weave each voice in the text like fragments of a conversation among guests in a symposium, or in a *terreiro*[6], where each one takes turns speaking and listening, strung along with a mediation by the host whenever needed. As a reader, you are also a guest in this symposium, to whom I extend an invitation to engage, with care, in the lives and reflections of others. In sum, this text serves as a "home" for the experiences of the authors featured in this collection in a dialogic-essayistic format. I recall what Theodor Adorno (1984) noted in his influential piece "The Essay as Form" where the essay functions as "an arena of intellectual experience" in which bits of knowledge can be brought together, tested, and further complicated. If we consider this text as a crossroads of sorts, guarded by the spirit of Exú, then this text also hosts this complication – and, as part of this anthology, also becomes the stranger in the house.

Estrangements

Visiting PhD student Camila Hartmann tells of what it feels like to travel outside of Brazil for the first time and a fear of not being able to communicate:

> Everything was new to me. Many 'first times' were unveiled even before arriving in Sweden. I grew up in a small town in the state of Rio Grande do Sul with just over six thousand inhabitants (…) Until my journey to the Scandinavian country [Sweden], my travel experiences were restricted to the Southern Cone [the southern tip of South America] (…) The language issue (…) was my main obstacle to socialising in the first few weeks. Since I had never experienced everyday interaction in English abroad, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to communicate. The initial insecurity was largely overcome by the extreme kind-ness shown to us by people. – Camila Hartmann

Upon arriving in Sweden, Ana Paula da Rosa reminds of a state of "white noise" like Flusser (2002) identified, which she describes as a "crisis of codes". She writes,

> Arriving in Stockholm was strange. A large and unfamiliar airport. Signs and loudspeakers with sounds impossible to identify. My English mixed with Portuguese allowed me to take a taxi (after detailed guidance from Isabel) (…) from the first hours in Stockholm until the first two or three days when I experienced a code crisis. My knowledge of English was insufficient; Portuguese words kept trying to come out of my mouth, clashing with the English and Swedish I heard

[6] Place where the rituals for Candomblé and other Afro–Brazilian religions take place, usually in circular formations.

> in the streets, and in the supermarket, mixed with Arabic and Ukrainian dialects. I did not recognise [words] and could not communicate. This code crisis did not prevent complete communication, but it left me quite uncomfortable, a stranger without the ability to identify sounds as if confused with traffic rules. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Visiting PhD student Rodrigo Duarte recounts his first moments from an embodied perspective and discovering a new identity as a foreigner which he had not experienced before:

> This period (…) has been marked by an intense sense of discovery. Discovering cultural differences, a sense of deterritorialisation, linguistic differences, codes and dynamics of interaction, and belonging to a social category with which, despite a theoretical affiliation, I had not yet felt 'in the body': that of being a Latin American from the Global South. – Rodrigo Duarte

Márcio Morrison, another visiting PhD student, experiences yet another culture shock, this time of a guest meeting a different idea of his host country, Sweden, than previously imagined:

> The apartment I rented in Sweden belonged to Södertörn University. The impression upon arrival was a complete displacement from my Swedish imaginary. This is because Flemingsberg and parts of southern Stockholm are urbanised by immigrants from all over the world, mostly Arabs who have a strong presence in local businesses such as markets, beauty salons, and small convenience stores. – Márcio Morrison

Settling in

Except for Viviane Borelli, a Visiting Professor who inaugurated the mobility program in a two-week stay by herself in 2022, all other researchers came in groups, something which facilitated the process of settling in with multiple dynamics of mutual support, both physical and online. Visiting Professor Ada C. Machado da Silveira recalls that

> The presence of my colleague from UNISINOS, Professor Ana Paula da Rosa, [who had arrived one month earlier] anticipated some issues that we had to face. The support of (…) Camila Hartmann, my advisee from UFSM, and Marcio Morrison (…) from UNISINOS, was inseparable companionship. Mutual monitoring via WhatsApp helped us face the harsh climate and mitigate adaptation difficulties. The newly formed group allowed us to overcome the isolation of our original family nuclei. The mission carried out together facilitated our integration and was recommended to project members in 2023. – Ada c. Machado da Silveira

Weather, of course, is something to consider when moving to Sweden. Some of our visitors, for example, had never experienced snow, and had difficulties adapting to winter darkness, or the traffic complications endemic in Stockholm due to heavy snowfall. Weather, for Machado da Silveira was read from the perspective of referential points, such as the presence of sunlight and a connection to natural cycles:

> [In Stockholm] I experienced the counter-nature life of resilient Swedes, imposing regulations not guided by sunlight [as in Rio Grande do Sul]. And this aspect became, at the end of the experience, the most significant demand for adaptation in Sweden because life in nature in southern Brazil allows us to regulate our daily routines based on sunlight. Moreover, this was a warning that our hosts always emphasised. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

My role as host also included making sure that all the infrastructure, contacts, housing, office keys, and access were organised even before each guest's arrival. More than mere formalities, these infrastructural elements are essential for building a sense of home. Aware of the difficulty of finding housing in Stockholm as strangers to the city, mindful of proper working conditions for researchers, and having a large contact network, I was aware that our Brazilian guests needed more than formal orientations to guide them at first. As Rodrigo Duarte describes,

> From the first contact, even before my arrival, Isabel showed interest in welcoming me with a kind of hospitality that is difficult to describe. Also Brazilian, she probably knows what it's like to arrive in a new space, amidst a new language, with little or nothing familiar in terms of culture. She has guided me in courses I can participate in, academic and non-academic events where I can find interesting aspects for research, and helped with bureaucracy at the university and housing. Isabel has shown me that it is possible to produce sensibilities from relationships that, supposedly, would only be academic. – Rodrigo Duarte

Mauricio Fanfa points out how everyday routines and social interactions in the university department made his transition into a new working environment easier:

> The first weeks were also about adapting to the routine and building bonds with colleagues. The department [has] a kitchen, and a socialisation space during lunchtime, where I had good opportunities to assimilate into the department's team, establish relationships, and get to know them better. It is also in this space that I introduce myself as Brazilian, and this identity is recognised and anticipated by the positive experiences the department had with colleagues who were at Södertörn University before [myself]. In such contexts, I could talk about

> Brazil, and future partnerships, receive suggestions, present my perspectives, and share experiences. – Mauricio Fanfa

The Issue of Language

One of the features of international research exchange environments is the use of English as a *lingua franca*. While this feature might be commonplace and often taken for granted in contexts like Sweden and other European countries, as well as in the Global North more generally, English is often perceived as a passive language in other global contexts, notably in Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country of continental proportions, where despite a political and geographical proximity to North America, English is not regularly used in everyday life, or academic contexts. Ada C. Machado da Silveira observes that,

> At Södertörn University, the use of English is systematic, which differs from many Brazilian universities where the use of that language for daily activities is entirely inappropriate, and its use is strictly reserved for reading and writing academic papers. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

By contrast, Aline Dalmolin points out how English is a widespread academic language in Sweden that favors internationalisation:

> (…) Swedes are accustomed to writing in English, and their academic production is heavily in this language. The reason for this is the perspective of speaking the *lingua franca* of the international academic community rather than being confined to the limitations of a "language island," given that Swedish is spoken only in Sweden. In this context, internationalisation is an experience that unfolds daily throughout the academic community (…) – Aline Dalmolin

When seen relative to other parts of the world that do not have English as a widespread language used in everyday life, such as Sweden, this may cause several barriers. However, even though English is widely spoken in everyday life in Sweden which facilitates foreigners' access to the local culture, the need to understand Swedish made itself apparent in situations of crisis such as public messages i.e. subways signalling traffic conditions:

> But for the living situation, linguistic [Swedish] requirements in the daily life of (…) were still pressing, especially when facing traffic issues resulting from snowstorms. Ada C. Machado da Silveira

Aline Dalmolin highlights the social aspects of "switching" to English which is, in my view, an essential practice of hospitality that entails hosts adapting to the

guest's conditions of participation in conversation, signifying an openness to the "Other" and a hospitable act of kindness in communication:

> On several occasions, when approaching a group engaged in conversation in Swedish, the language spoken by the group was kindly switched to English, facilitating inclusion in daily conversations. If the difficulty of communicating in a language as distinct from Portuguese as Swedish was intimidating before coming to the country, the kindness of professors and students in using the English language greatly eased our assimilation as foreign visitors. – Aline Dalmolin

The Experience of Time, Work, and Affects

Hospitality includes the ability to read each culture's practices of hospitality, practices of communication, and social hierarchies. For example, in Sweden, the non-hierarchical and progressive work-life balance approach towards work contrasts with Brazilian working cultures – a culture that is paradoxically marked by more fixed social and professional hierarchies yet more personal ties between colleagues. These are often reflected in how professional and personal communication in academia often spill into each other requiring constant availability – thus mediatising working life to a large degree. For instance, Swedish colleagues mainly use email as a medium for all professional communication, whereas Brazilians primarily communicate in multiple individual or group channels on WhatsApp that favors closer interpersonal communication. As a result, some conversations are confined to more informal mediums such as messaging apps, which are consequently often used for decision-making and which overlap with private and leisure time. Ana Paula da Rosa observes that,

> Perhaps, of all the experiences observed by this researcher during the exile, the way of managing time was one of the most impactful. [In Sweden] There was no WhatsApp, no meetings outside of working hours, agendas organising bibliographic production were set in advance (in some cases, with planning for half a year), and a care for individual and collective well-being. (…) In Brazil, we live under the pressure to stay connected. Strangely, Sweden is much more mediatised and connected than the countries in Latin America. Many processes are done through apps and machines, but the human dimension has not been relegated to a secondary role. There is a genuine care for time, not only work time but also time dedicated to life that transcends offices and classrooms. – Ana Paula da Rosa

On a second level, hospitality, as a practice of mediation between hosts and guests requires bridging cultural differences in practices of building trust. Whereas Swedes are often more socially reserved which ensures a respect for the privacy of others, by contrast Brazilians are often gregarious and thrive on

continued social contact and inter-dependency where trust is built. This can be seen in cultural practices of digitisation, for instance. Whereas in Sweden many apps and services, including social media, are meant to substitute social interaction for the sake of expediency, efficiency, and convenience, in Brazil apps and services often serve to amplify already existing communicative practices cumulatively. Marcio Morrison, who did ethnographic fieldwork in Stockholm for his study on mediatised newsrooms and the symbiotic process between work and mobile technology, makes pointed observations about how social norms and cultural practices may sometimes correspond to media practices in different cultural contexts:

> Despite being mediatised in various structures, Swedes still live in a system that is very distant from the personal connections we have in Latin America, specifically in Brazil. Facebook and Snapchat, for example, continue to be extremely popular social networks among Swedes, including the younger population. On the other hand, obtaining a Swede's personal phone number is something highly formal and takes time. The overall social distance between people made me realise that this distancing extends to processes of the circulation of meanings and how social media networks are used. – Marcio Morrison

A Sharpening of the Senses: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Mediatisation

One of the efforts of internationalisation is creating diversity among students and faculty. Marcio Morrison and Camila Hartmann recall the impact of diversity in their experiences as guest doctoral students both as part of the student body and the impact of different courses that opened a cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, and reflexive perspective in their work:

> My doctoral colleagues hailed from various parts of the world: Sweden, Mexico, Italy, Germany, and Indonesia, ensuring a diversity of discussions and perspectives not only on mediatisation and media studies in general, but also on distinct cultures and perceptions of our own nationalities. – Marcio Morrison

> [In addition to courses in the Media and Communications department] I also participated in several activities linked to the Department of Journalism at Södertörn, such as Higher Seminars and two courses from its master's program (International Master's Programme in Journalism). This allowed me to establish connections with students from various parts of the world, making my stay more enjoyable [and] contributed to thinking about the methodological challenges involved in [comparative] studies (…), as in my thesis. The texts studied provide a basis for reflecting on the complexity involved in constructing the coverage of the [Russia–Ukraine] war as manifested in the front pages of the Brazilian and Swedish newspapers, produced in such different realities. – Camila Hartmann

Whereas many "culture shocks" occurred at a more personal level, there were also interesting observations made about understanding the very diverse contexts regarding technology, media, society, and everyday life in Sweden and Brazil. Guest researchers' readings of technical and mediatic realities in Sweden prompted many reflections on different approaches to mediatisation theory itself, but more importantly, it made their home contexts appear in high relief. Mauricio Fanfa's research, specifically oriented towards understanding cosmotechnics[7] (Hui, 2017) in Brazil and Sweden, serves to understand general differences in technological regimes and how they are perceived and rolled out in both societies, as well as global effects on these perceptions:

> The contrast promoted by exchange activities is notable for sharpening perceptions and fostering reflection on the Brazilian situation and our relationship with science and technology (…) In Brazil, technology is regarded as a promise, a solution to everyday problems. When this promise is fulfilled, it comes marked with the challenges and values of modernity (…) We discuss how to survive (or navigate around) the technological innovations that come. I perceive it to be not so different in Sweden, which needs to deal with similar problems. However, technology appears as a product that is difficult to control. Product, in the sense of production, as the country historically produces high technology, is a characteristic part of its economy, giving the debates a tone of power and agency over innovation. On the other hand, the technological production sector has globally been engulfed in political instability, making its control difficult and generating a certain existential anxiety. – Mauricio Fanfa

Others made poignant observations as newcomers to what they perceive as a fully digitised life in Sweden, which differs from patterns of digitalisation in Brazil, as Fanfa observes above. Marcio Morrison observes how digitalisation is embedded in everyday life and makes explicit his perspective as a guest reflecting on technological dependency which seems to be invisible to the hosts perhaps blinded by their environment – what Flusser (2002) called "the cotton blanket of habit". He writes,

> Mediatisation in the city of Stockholm is invisible to the eyes of the Swedes because it is intrinsic to the practices and social processes adopted by Swedish citizens. Let me explain: technological movements are embedded in the "Swedish DNA," and therefore, residents don't perceive how much they are mediatised. They simply live in mediatisation; here, it is a natural ambience. This can be

[7] According to Yuk Hui's (2017) definition, cosmotechnics "is the unification of the cosmos and the moral through technical activities, whether craft-making or art-making. There hasn't been one or two technics, but many cosmotechnics. What kind of morality, which and whose cosmos, and how to unite them vary from one culture to another according to different dynamics".

> observed in daily practices such as taking the subway, for example. Everything can be consolidated into a mobile device. (…) Here [in Sweden], we perceive transformations in logics based on current social practices and processes. In contrast, these integrated and technological systems are still under development in much of Brazil. Thus, we have distinct mediatised times between the two discrepant sociocultural realities. – Marcio Morrison

He also reveals how these cultural differences are reflected in different approaches to mediatisation:

> The overall social distance between people made me realise that this distancing extends to processes of circulation of meanings and how social media networks are used. Despite a deep discussion about mediatisation [in Sweden], it seems to focus on technology, often confusing researchers with concepts of mediation. In other words, European mediatisation seems more concerned with the relationship between the subject and technology than with the relationship between the subject, technology, and subject. It is precisely the studies on circulation developed in Brazil and Argentina that underpin this observation, as the point of interest and departure lies in the production of meaning, circulation, and circuits that arise from networks. – Marcio Morrison

Aline Dalmolin reflects on these epistemological aspects, also concerning issues that seem to be more urgent in research agendas regarding mediatisation, as reflected in each academic context's preferred objects of study and methodologies from a comparative point of view:

> Swedish society is heavily digitised, and participating in daily activities with a researcher's perspective on mediatisation allowed me to reflect daily on practices permeated by these logics. This occurred both in day-to-day activities and through contact with some of the research conducted by Södertörn researchers, who are strongly dedicated to exploring topics like artificial intelligence and the implications of digital culture on society, especially regarding the welfare state. While these topics may seem somewhat distant from the reality observed in Brazil, these approaches enable a prospective comparison, observing traits of our society in its vicissitudes and difficulties (…). – Aline Dalmolin

Taking stock of the differences in approaches to mediatisation theory in Latin America and Scandinavia, Camila Hartmann notes some interesting similarities and differences, especially regarding Verón's concept of circulation which is less known in Europe:

> It was a privilege to learn more about European approaches by personally listening to highly recognised researchers in the field especially keen on hearing different perspectives – the debate around circulation, for example, is less known among Europeans. In general terms, the socio-constructivist approach under-

> taken in the Global North has many similarities with the perspectives being developed in Brazil and Argentina. – Camila Hartmann

Ana Paula da Rosa notes that differences in approaches to mediatisation are indeed fruitful, and observes that

> (…) within the perspective of mediatisation, it was essential to perceive the numerous possibilities for debate and [theoretical] tensioning. There are many advances [in Sweden] in angles I had not considered, partly because the Swedish group also adopts the long-term perspective of mediatisation, although they deal with other observables strongly influenced by datafication and technological dimensions. For us, the question of the circulation of meanings is central and seems to be a key point for the strengthening of our creative and inferential connections. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Besides the apparent overreliance on technological dimensions in the European mediatisation approaches, da Rosa highlights that there are indeed global hierarchies in a globalised setting that highlight asymmetries and inequalities in terms of the production of knowledge. Some of these asymmetries are often caused by lack of knowledge or access to different epistemologies that require an approximation of worlds, or the creation of a crossroads where different worlds can meet. She writes that

> (…) I often found myself challenged to think about how to claim a space for mediatisation in the Latin perspective if we do not know each other. It became clear during this period, not only in Sweden but also in a trip I made to Portugal and Germany for conferences, that our European colleagues do not read us, but at the same time, we all think dialectically. How to bridge this gap? How can I contribute with my texts? (…) Being invited to a panel at ICA by Anne [Kaun], planning joint texts with Stina [Bengtsson], Göran [Bolin], Heike [Graf], and Isabel [Löfgren], even if they are still only in the realm of ideas, is a first move of rupture. The second is to write in English, breaking the language barrier that also separates us. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Collaborations

As a host, I received these challenges as an opportunity to help create, together with my colleagues at Södertörn, a supportive and stimulating environment for collaboration and co-production of knowledge and to begin to address these gaps. Besides informal daily interactions in our department with joint lunches and coffee breaks ("*fika*") and after-work activities, all researchers were offered the opportunity to present their research in the department's weekly higher seminar series consisting of presentations followed by a discussion. These semi-

formal occasions often became launching pads for new ideas and collaborations, as in the case of Viviane Borelli, who co-authored several articles with Södertörn colleagues in English, thus extending her work outside of Brazil. It also provided much-needed visibility for the work of the Brazilian guests whose work may not yet be known outside of Brazil:

> The most challenging activity was undoubtedly the presentation for the Higher Seminar (…). After the presentation, I answered questions from participants in English (with some translation help from Isabel Löfgren), and exchanged theoretical perspectives and methodological contributions within the scope of mediatisation research. This presentation led to subsequent meetings with Professor Heike Graf, who was very interested in learning more about the perspective of the Argentine semiotician and sociologist Eliseo Verón on the concept of circulation I introduced in my talk. (…) This environment also resulted in a collaboration with Isabel Löfgren about mediatisation, circulation, and meme cultures that we consolidated later that year[8]. – Viviane Borelli

Collaboration also extended to mentoring visiting doctoral students with joint supervision by Södertörn and Brazilian faculty from UFSM and UNISINOS. This allowed Brazilian students to get valuable theoretical and methodological inputs and access to local resources. It is interesting to note that all visiting doctoral and post-doctoral researchers decided to conduct empirical research in Sweden for their doctoral theses in addition to their existing material and research conducted in Brazil. This required overcoming language barriers and incorporating world events and different realities into their comparative approaches. Ada C. Machado da Silveira sums up this structure of mutual collaboration and support structures, which seems unique to the research environment in the Media and Communication Studies department at Södertörn:

> The Research Day[9] activity with some [Södertörn] professors and doctoral students allowed for closer engagement with their intellectual work. Göran Bolin suggested procedures for data collection in the research of our doctoral student Camila Hartmann. Stina Bengtsson provided valuable suggestions for the development of activities for UNISINOS' doctoral student, Marcio Morrison,

[8] This resulted in a co-authored chapter: Borelli, V. and Löfgren, I. "Around the World with the 'Truck Patriot': Memetisation and the Circulation of Laughter in the 2022 Post-Election Period in Brazil". In: Caffagni, L., Löfgren, I, Martins, G. and Sartoretto, P. (eds.) *The Planalto Riots: Making and Unmaking a Failed Coup in Brazil*, Theory on Demand #49. Amsterdam, Institute of Network Cultures, 2024. Several researchers from the Capes-STINT exchange also participated in this book.

[9] Södertörn's Media and Communication Studies department conducts a "Research Day" once every semester where staff can present ongoing research or research applications in a dialogic peer-review process. All members of staff, permanent or visiting, are encouraged to participate.

> and Per Ståhlberg assisted in the application of the ethnographic approach, helping overcome challenges related to direct observation of newsrooms during the challenging times we live in. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

> The event [Research Day] had a format that I was not very familiar with but found quite interesting – professors and doctoral students provided feedback on each other's work to enhance the submitted texts. I felt in a healthy and safe environment for collective knowledge construction. – Camila Hartmann

Shifting the Gaze

Recalling Flusser's (2002) journey of transformation of the migrant, it is interesting to see how the research residencies in Sweden transformed the Brazilian guest researcher's way of seeing and understanding their position as media scholars in the world. Aline Dalmolin recounts how being distant from her home environment allowed her to see her research object, the development of far-right platformed discourse in Brazil, in a new light. And in turn, this new "way of seeing" allowed her to perceive similar political movements more clearly. She writes,

> But the most important factor to be highlighted was the opportunity, once situated in a Scandinavian context, to construct the perspective of a 'foreign gaze' on one's own culture. This allowed for a differentiated view of the (…) issues I have been working on concerning the circulation of disinformation and hate speech in the extreme right-wing media sphere in Brazil. The establishment of a 'foreign gaze' from an ethnographic perspective, a subject widely debated in the field of anthropology, enabled a reflective look to understand the points of intersection and division with the mediatisation experience of extreme right-wing discourses in Europe and other related phenomena. – Aline Dalmolin

Reciprocity

Host-guest relationships are not only built on responsibility and mutual support – they are also built on the principle of reciprocity. In December 2022, the Swedish team had the opportunity to travel to UFSM, in Santa Maria, Brazil, and participate in a conference where we felt welcomed and taken care of by their staff and students. It also made possible the deepening of personal ties of friendship and continued collaboration. Lastly, an important aspect of hospitality is engaging in cultures of sharing, where food is an essential factor – something which Exú, the guardian of the crossroads is especially enchanted by. Viviane Borelli opened her own home to receive us and recounts her gesture of hospitality in the form of gifting:

> With the same kindness I received in Sweden, after the conclusion of the *V International Seminar on Mediatisation and Social Processes* in December 2022, I had the pleasure of opening my home to welcome our Swedish colleagues (…) Cultural experiences were intense: from the Gaúcho barbecue with the typical ribs to the traditional Brazilian caipirinha, carefully made by after harvesting fresh lemons. It was possible to show a bit of life in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, in a calm place surrounded by nature and with an abundance of fruits, vegetables, and greens. – Viviane Borelli

After these four years of intense exchange, first online and later through physical researchers' mobility, the universities in the Capes-STINT research exchange have begun to draft pathways of continued collaboration beyond the project. For example, an exchange agreement between UFSM and Södertörn makes it possible for Brazilian students to study in Sweden with a waived fee, and Södertörn sent their first visiting doctoral student to UFSM, Saralie Sernhede, in 2024.

A farewell…*até logo*!

These rich and diverse experiences evolving through time were possible thanks to a well-structured relationship between hosts and guests, and the practice of hospitality in the project – a perspective that can enrich future forms of international collaboration and increase the visibility of scientific production from both sides. As Camila Hartmann writes,

> At Södertörn, I felt welcomed and encouraged to establish genuine dialogues with the high-quality science produced in Brazil. (…) Brazilian studies on mediatisation need to be more recognised so that there can be effective dialogue, and I am proud to have been part of a movement to increase our deserved visibility. – Camila Hartmann

But more importantly, this enables the creation of a community with a sense of belonging. As Mauricio Fanfa writes,

> The familiarity (…) is like being among friends of friends. The sense of belonging is essential for the well-being and productivity of being in a distant place, while also encouraging and qualifying intellectual exchange, the ultimate goal of the international research networks we have built. – Mauricio Fanfa

And Ana Paula da Rosa complements with a remark from a decolonial approach,

> The immeasurable role of this project is not only to enable student and teacher mobility but to allow us to effectively recognise ourselves as peers, breaking with the colonial systems that still prevail, including in science. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Concluding Thoughts

I conclude this "symposium" with the words of Ada C. Machado Silveira, who ends her report by writing a conclusive statement that harkens back to the values involved in the practice and ethics of hospitality. In short, *internationalisation-as-hospitality* enables the creation of long-lasting bonds and dialogue necessary to form and maintain a community. She writes,

> Finally, I would like to point out that the differences in academic culture have been overcome by us and in future missions through the observance of some cultural similarities. *These similarities relate to the zeal, care, respect, and commitment* to the individual and collective intellectual formation of the young people who come to us. Furthermore, the critical perspective that we have developed together regarding the increasing mediatisation of society is pertinent. The final result of this activity, as discussed earlier, proves to be promising for the North–South dialogue. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira [author's emphasis]

Each visiting researcher's impressions on their stays in Sweden created a narrative that underscores the importance of viewing internationalisation efforts through the lens of hospitality rather than solely through institutional frameworks. By emphasising the host-guest relationship and the intersubjective dimension of research exchange programs, I hope to have highlighted the human connections and ethical responsibilities involved in facilitating academic mobility. This perspective expands beyond contractual agreements and institutional structures to acknowledge the affective labor and personal investment by both guests and hosts required to create a welcoming academic community.

However, this process presents certain challenges and transformations experienced by both hosts and guests during research mobility exchanges. From navigating language barriers and cultural differences to overcoming geopolitical obstacles and different epistemological approaches and lifeworlds, the exchange process involves multifaceted experiences that extend beyond academic outcomes and an academic culture based on status and measured by productivity. Through personal accounts and reflections, the essay captures the complexities of academic "migration" and how it reshapes individuals' perceptions and identities about themselves and their intellectual production which has long-term effects and is kept through continued friendship and intellectual affinities.

Drawing on concepts from philosophy and media theory, the chapter also explored the embodied circulation of meanings within the context of research mobility. By invoking the figure of Exú and referencing thinkers like Lévinas, Derrida, and Flusser, the narrative illustrates how encounters between scholars

from different cultural and academic backgrounds at an epistemological crossroads may generate new insights and perspectives. This circulation of meanings, facilitated by face-to-face interactions and mediated communication, enriches the intellectual landscape and fosters creative dialogue across disciplinary boundaries, academic cultures, and spheres of knowledge production that may not be possible otherwise.

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Between 2019 and 2023, media researchers from Södertörn University in Sweden, UNISINOS and Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) in Brazil, engaged in a collaborative effort to explore Scandinavian and South American perspectives on mediatisation, connecting universities from opposite sides of the world.

The project aimed to promote a nuanced understanding of mediatisation theory from different cultural perspectives and media studies traditions, dismantle epistemological barriers, and provide new insights into societies undergoing the process of mediatisation.

The chapters presented in this volume are grounded on the mobility of researchers across both countries where a productive knowledge exchange contributed to diversify epistemological, empirical, and methodological approaches to mediatisation theory, and provide new perspectives on mediatisation theory in contested media scenarios in Sweden, Brazil, and beyond.

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