PROGRAMME

9.30-10.30
Registration and Breakfast

10.30-12.15
Early Career Researchers Workshop
Fresh Perspectives and Research Projects
Chair > Scott Downham, Royal Holloway

Discussant
Prof Ben O'Loughlin, Director of Newpolcom

Presentations

Scott Downham, Royal Holloway
How only some Citizens are Socialised into Filter Bubbles and Echo Chambers. The Implications for Agency on Digital Platforms
Particularly since the shock popularity and victories of Brexit and Donald Trump, there has been concern that citizens, en masse, exist in democratically dysfunctional ideological bubbles, where they only hear likeminded perspectives. This can occur especially online, via personalisation algorithms of digital platforms like search engines and social media. Nonetheless, researchers now contest the extent of these bubbles. This study therefore explores specific causes and effects of 'embubblement' in one marginal and perhaps high-risk group, young people. They are considered more impressionable, and more get their news online. This mixed-methods digital ethnography contains a 10-wave cohort study, diary study hybrid. One day a month for 10 months, participants aged 16-18 (n=20) captured any political communication they encountered or did, across all mediums online and in-person. They primarily made phone screen

recordings, but could also use photo, video, sound recording and writing. Findings strengthen the literature's emerging consensus, overturning the dystopian filter bubble narrative. The research question explores what is causing embubblement. Participants are in these bubbles only to a small degree, except when dominated by very specific structural factors, 'socialising agents', across: family, peers, education, media and events. For instance, it could be said that digital media works to embubble citizens; keeping citizens reliant on them, not any competitors, to maximise profit, exemplified by 'walled garden' news mobile apps. On social media, primarily TikTok, personalisation algorithms work to embubble users; to keep users consuming content to generate revenue. Political actors, especially TikTok influencers, do likewise, to spread their ideologies or win elections. For this minority of citizens to reclaim agency, resist embubblement from data commodification, and find a path back to the public sphere, one main policy recommendation is to strengthen the UK's limited political and digital literacy provision, to enable open-minded deliberation.

Hugh Hammond, Royal Holloway
Thought and Body in Platform Labour

Harry Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capitalism identifies a separation between ideal and material work as constitutive of the labour process of what he calls monopoly capitalism. Ideal work refers to conceptualising how labour could be carried out, while the material work denotes the process of carrying out labour. It is this ideal/material split of labour, with management taking hold of the ideal realm and cutting off workers from their capacity to think about their own labour process, that Braverman asserts is key to capitalism's degradation of worker agency. It is notable then that platform labour requires the worker to think about aspects of their own labour: the feedback mechanisms employed by platforms direct workers' attentions to specific aspects of their performance (for example, an Uber or Deliveroo driver's speed, acceleration, and turning) urging them to change how they enact certain aspects of labour without directly telling them how to do it. This suggests that the ideal/material split of labour is not as clean under platforms than it was under monopoly capitalism, and it is necessary to ask what relation between ideal and material work platforms demand of their workers through these feedback mechanisms. I focus on how processes such as machine learning, data collection and predictive analysis produce feedback designed to influence workers, looking at the work of media scholars Adrian Mackenzie and Louise Amoore alongside research on platform labour by Jamie Woodcock, Callum Cant, and Alex Rosenblat. I consider how platform labour relies on a different conception of the mind/body relation to that described by Braverman, and how through this relation new forms of control and exploitation emerge. At stake in such an analysis is not only building accurate accounts of the labour process of Uber and Deliveroo workers that can explain the intervention of new technologies and algorithmic processes, but also understanding how the role of the labouring worker itself has changed in the context of platform capitalism.

Arvind Kumar, Royal Holloway
Invention of Resistance Strategies against Everyday Discrimination. Digital Ethnographic Study of Anti-Caste Twitter Spaces in India

Based on the participant observation of a number of anti-caste twitter spaces and semi-structured interviews of their organisers, this research seeks to explore how anti-caste social activists in India have been using twitter spaces to invent strategies to fight against everyday caste discrimination and violence perpetrated against marginalised communities; and what are the challenges that they face in their pursuit for justice, and how do they navigate form them? On the pretext of this, this research investigates how traditional social hierarchies such as caste (Dumont, 1980; Wilkerson, 2020) get reproduced in the digital spaces (Mandal, 2011), and whether such reproduction prevents voices of marginalised communities in these spaces, and whether there are avenues to overcome from marginalisation.

Dr Cat Morgan, Heriot-Watt University
Digital Trade Union Work: Correcting Misinformation About Strike Action

A culture of connection established by the web and our everyday use of digital technologies have changed how trade union work is performed, becoming more pronounced due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The growing literature on digital trade union work demonstrates that unions use diverse social media to communicate with union members, campaign and organise. However, much of the existing work in this area focuses on traditional union tactics and their replication, such as digital picket lines supporting a physical picket. This pilot study investigates the National Union of Rail, Maritime

and Transport Workers' (RMT) use of Twitter, bypassing traditional communication channels to build solidarity with and control the narrative about strike action. We examine Twitter data by the @RMTunion account in 2022, and the replies and mentions used to directly address other users who share inaccurate information about industrial action and defend workers' rights. We found the RMT's engagement with misinformation is significant as (1) Twitter is an increasingly common source for news, (2) and is a public platform that can be used, unintentionally or by design, to broadcast the message to a broad audience. Findings indicate that the RMT has become a powerful voice on Twitter by contesting misinformation about ongoing industrial action. Further, other users have liked and disseminated their content, which directly impacts the audience they can reach. This has been instrumental in gaining support from the public during strike action, which is crucial to their success.

Chris Pavlakis, Northumbria University
Nested precarities of creative labor on social media

While metrics have long played an important, albeit fraught, role in the media and cultural industries, quantified indices of online visibility—likes, favorites, subscribers, and shares—have been indelibly cast as routes to professional success and status in the digital creative economy. Against this backdrop, this study sought to examine how creative laborers' pursuit of social media visibility impacts their processes and products. Drawing upon in-depth interviews with 30 aspiring and professional content creators on a range of social media platforms—Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, and Twitter—we contend that their experiences are not only shaped by the promise of visibility, but also by its precarity. As such, we present a framework for assessing the volatile nature of visibility in platformized creative labor, which includes unpredictability across three levels: (1) markets, (2) industries, and (3) platform features and algorithms. After mapping out this ecological model of the nested precarities of visibility, we conclude by addressing both continuities with—and departures from—the earlier modes of instability that characterized cultural production, with a focus on the guiding logic of platform capitalism.

Jonathan Pettifer, University of Birmingham
Norm Contestation through Digital Platforms and Social Media

Understandings of norm contestation and resistance in international relations largely focus on the roles of state-level actors or international organisations. Theoretical and empirical work that examines how contestation occurs also suffer from two main limitations:

- Firstly, they over-focus on the use of language alone to explain contestation.
- Secondly, the role of digital platforms and individuals in helping to drive resistance and contestation in society is often ignored.

Social media and the internet are behemoths of instant information and news, and as such, their potential for influence cannot be understated. Therefore, I propose that research into social media and digital platforms is an essential avenue for further development into understanding contestation at the micro level, specifically in relation to the acceptance of queer people in society. Contestation does not occur at the macro level alone. Work into the use of digital platforms by individuals could provide valuable new insights into the interplay between contesting actors at multiple levels. Returning to the issue of an overfocus on language, research into the use of language on social media provides interesting possibilities. It brings a more nuanced understanding of how discourse influences contesting behaviours as well as how social media can easily spread new beliefs, which in turn influence actors at all levels. I propose that large-N studies be conducted to examine contesting language on digital platforms. They would shed light on interplays between national and international actors' behaviour and allow comparisons between increases in the use of certain language associated with the contestation and resistance of queer acceptance norms. This would help to explain the conditions in which norm contestation is more likely to occur, and solutions to this could then be proposed to better promote understanding and acceptance towards all people, particularly those in the queer community.

12.15-13.00
Lunch Break

13.00-15.00
Panel: Commodities vs Commons
Chair > Dr Marco Guglielmo

Keynote
Prof Phoebe Moore, University of Essex
The Social Relations of Data Production and Diminishing Rights to the Subject

Phoebe is a globally recognised expert in digitalisation and the workplace. Phoebe's book *The Quantified Self in Precarity: Work, Technology and What Counts* (2019) uncovers how the integration of big data and artificial intelligence systems into workplaces bears new risks for the working class. Phoebe has led projects on Platform Labour for the European Commission and the International Labour Organisation. Phoebe is chief editor of the journal *Global Political Economy* and co-director of the *Centre for Commons Organising, Values Equalities and Resilience* (COVER).

Guest Speaker
Gabriele Masci, Open Impact

Gabriele is manager at Open Impact, an innovative start-up and accredited spin-off of the University of Milano-Bicocca that provides services and develops digital products for the measurement, enhancement and management of impacts in a perspective of integrated sustainability. Open Impact is itself a platform cooperative aiming to inspire and support policy-makers and stakeholders in their transitions towards the economy of the commons.

Presentations

Scott Downham, Royal Holloway
Public Attitudes towards Data use
Vast amounts of personal data are behind digital platforms. These structures cannot accommodate the agency of citizens on such matters, nor should academics critique digital platforms on such matters, without consideration of public attitudes towards data use. Yet, this is only an emerging research area. Hence, this paper summarises and evaluates the early evidence. Key findings are: 1) UK citizens are fairly optimistic about data use generally, unchanged in recent years. 2) UK citizens are, however, wary of the risks of data use. These concerns have increased in recent years. 3) Several demographic traits predict greater positivity on many questions of data use, including: people who are more digitally familiar, higher socioeconomic status people, younger people, black and Asian people, males, those living in urban or affluent areas, parents and carers (generally, and specifically in regard to their children's data) and those with positive views of the organisation involved. 4) Emergency services are most trusted to handle data. National and local government sit midway. Last are private companies, including social media companies. 5) The public are neutral to slightly optimistic about artificial intelligence (AI) involvement, but wary of the risks. 6) Organisations are far more positive about data use. 7) Research commonly involves national annual polling. Meanwhile, common for local samples are questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. 8) Some authorities plan longitudinal research using bespoke citizen panels annually, tracking improvements over time. However, of those seen, no updates have been published yet. 9) Current research has several limitations hindering reliability. In light of public support for ethical data use by organisations, recommendations suggest how practices could be better informed. Mainly, what could be used are observational studies of what people actually consent to, rather than relying entirely on abstract and hypothetical self-reports.

Dr Ilona Steiler, Tampere University, Finland
Political agency in the platform economy: a matter of time
This paper explores the potential for political agency within the platform economy by focusing on autonomy over time. The main argument is that the platform economy—and digital capitalism more broadly—essentially thrives on an accelerated mode of appropriation, commodification and monetized exchange of time, as well as on the precarization of labour. Increasing experiences of time scarcity and labour precarity, in turn, present challenges to the political agency of both platform workers and the consumers of platform services. The paper teases out the role of platforms in

the 'paradoxical phenomenon of simultaneous technological acceleration and increasing time scarcity' (Hartmut Rosa): while the digitalized workplace leads to increased time pressures, not least through the spatial and temporal conflation of work and leisure, digital technologies such as platforms also provide possibilities for speedier work processes and for 'buying time' by micro-outsourcing productive and reproductive tasks, for instance in the sectors of knowledge production or food delivery. Unlike previous forms of delegating tasks, e.g. domestic service, the infrastructure of digital platforms shrinks time and space in an unprecedented manner, contributing to further acceleration. While such digital buying of time is made possible by the supply of hidden, comparatively cheap, and disposable labour that is virtually working 24/7, the demand for platform services also reflects a widely perceived need to optimize time-use amidst competitive labour markets, lacking job security and multiple responsibilities. In conclusion, the paper suggests that political agency in the platform economy must be understood within the logic of 'all-the-time capitalism' (Jeffrey Nealon) or '24/7 capitalism' (Jonathan Crary); yet, though the potential for agency and action is severely limited by constant time pressures, time and the struggle over time also offer key instruments for resistance and empowerment by exploiting the temporal vulnerabilities of capitalism.

Dr Bradley Ward, University of Birmingham
Progressive Network Systems. The Political Organisation of Disruptive Agency in the Digital Commons
This paper introduces the concept of the Progressive Network System (PNS) as a normative and descriptive theory of counter-hegemonic organisation and explains how politics-as-a-digital common can enable disruptive agency across the PNS. In summary, the 'network' connects supporters and activists into clusters of dissent; the 'system' structures them into organisational ecologies; and the 'progressive' ideology establishes cohesion and direction by cementing a sense of unity across the network system. The main argument of the paper is that digital platforms provide the crucial infrastructure to expand the actual potentialities for non-hierarchical distribution and coordination within PNSs, but it is their nature of a common good, in conjunction with the technology, that is crucial for the advance of an alternative social order. The PNS as a common platform implies two critical principles. First, shared protocols, and not fixed constitutions, define (a) 'the landscape of the network – who is connected to whom' and (b) the governance of the network. Second, control over the flows of information should be distributed across the collective network to (a) enable individuals and collectives to contest and adapt the shared protocols and (b) to protect the network from the surveillance and coercive activities seeking to dismantle and/or boycott the networks. The final part of the paper presents empirical examples of political organisations that approximate the PNS model, with references to the Squares' movements in Spain in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and to the movements for Constitutional reform in Chile. Through these empirical references, I will identify the potential tensions between the need for direction and the requirements of the politics as a common.

15.00-15.15
Coffee Break

15.15-17.15
Panel: Surveillance vs Empowerment
Chair > Prof Ben O'Loughlin

Keynote
Dr Elinor Carmi, City University of London
To become empowered click here: Shaping people's agency according to tech bros tales

Elinor is a digital rights advocate, feminist, researcher and journalist who has been working, writing and teaching on data politics, data literacies, feminist approaches to media and data, data justice and internet governance. Currently, Elinor is working on the Nuffield Foundation project *Developing a Minimum Digital Living Standard*. Elinor has published extensively on the impact of the politics of data on democratic and gender relations, and on how data literacy can prompt new networks of resistance.

Guest Speaker
Dr Declan McDowell-Naylor, Information Commissioner's Office

Declan is Senior Policy Officer at the Information Commissioner's Office, where is job focuses on matters of regulation and protection of personal data. Prior to joining ICO, Declan served as Research Associate at Cardiff University on a project examining the alternative online media in the United Kingdom. Declan was awarded with a PhD in Public Policy at Royal Holloway.

Presentations

Rachel Brock, University of Liverpool
Visibility as Vulnerability: Surveillance Capitalism's Threat to Women in Online Political Spaces
The relationship between visibility and vulnerability is intrinsically tied to power, identity, and marginalisation. Narratives of surveillance are often centred in the idea that individual privacy must give way to collective safety, and that if one behaves "well" then there is no danger in this. When we extend this outside of the government sphere, we see the same echoes in campaigns such as the push to restrict online anonymity as part of the Online Safety Bill. However, in the era of surveillance capitalism, what is it to be "visible"? What impacts can visibility have on our lives? This paper proposes that surveillance technology that is meant to provide security can instead create vulnerability, and that this risk is increased if you are a woman or exist outside the gender binary. Feminist research on public spaces tells us that gendered violence often occurs as a response to perceived infringement on male space such as politics (Mantilla, 2013; Sobieraj, 2021). Surveillance technology is designed for implementation without user knowledge or engagement, and even if people are aware of the algorithms it does not mean they understand them (O'Neil, 2016; Uricchio, 2017). This makes it difficult for people to opt out of surveillance, or to understand what data is being collected or how it could be used. Mosaic theory demonstrates that even seemingly unidentifiable pieces of information can be pieced together to obliterate attempts at privacy (Nyugen, 2018). When women's online lives and voices are seen in "male" spaces of the internet, there can be vitriolic backlash. When these online lives are linked to offline identity, this can create dangerous potential for offline harm. Based upon theory and lived experience of women who have been the targets of this violence, this paper outlines surveillance capitalism's threat to women. Visibility, in this case, is vulnerability."

Nathan Critch, University of Birmingham
Public Inquiries and Digital Platforms: Spaces of Resistance or Continued Containment?
Public inquiries are used by UK governments to respond to the most high-profile negative events. Whilst ostensibly triggered to investigate, make recommendations and improve policy, from a more critical perspective the public inquiry can be considered a tool of the state. From this perspective, inquiries shift public debates regarding crises into highly formalized, legalistic institutions (inquiries) that seek to "take the heat out of" social conflict. These are often difficult and restrictive processes to participate in for those directly affected by crises. Inquiries therefore seek to depoliticize and contain the political fallout that accompanies crises and seek to limit the terms of political debate around reform and responsibility. When examining more recent inquiries, however, interesting developments have occurred related to the rise of digital platforms and the interface between these platforms and public inquiries. On the one hand, the ubiquity of digital platforms has meant inquiries themselves becoming "more online" in various ways, on the other, those who are directly affected by crises have begun to use digital platforms to organize themselves within and outside of inquiries and as a means of publicizing their perspectives. This paper investigates these dynamics within several recent inquiries. It explores whether this interface between inquiries and digital platforms presents opportunities for resistance for those affected by crises or simply represents continued containment and depoliticization by the state on different terrain.

Dr Ramón Villaplana Jiménez, Catholic University of Lille, France
Political parties as –questionable– agents for openness
Political parties are a key agent considering the potential openness of politics and governance in terms of transparency, participation and collaboration. On the one hand, parties control the centres of government, being responsible for making decisions and supervising policy implementation. From that privileged position, they can choose to promote

or hinder open government measures according to their own particular interests, including electoral interests, the guard of secrets, and other matters related to the privileged position of certain lobbies. On the other hand, opposition parties frequently demand more transparency and accountability, in addition to acting as collective actors in some participatory and collaborative processes. A third point of interest is how political parties have applied open government measures to their internal operations, digitalising electoral, deliberative and communicative processes. The different behaviours of parties have consequences on the quality of public policies and the democratic system. This paper reviews the current state of the issue at a theoretical level and identifies examples of attitudes in favour of and resistance to open government among some European political parties.
Co-authors: Dr Giulia Sandri (ESPOL Lille) and Dr Adrián Megías (University of Murcia).

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 2023

9.30-10.30
Registration and Breakfast

12.15-13.00
Panel: Virtual Realities and Artificial Intelligence
Chair > Dr Pauline Heinrichs

Keynote
Dr Emiliano Treré, Cardiff University
Emerging shapes of domination, resistance and imagination in the age of AI

Emiliano is Reader in data agency and media ecology. He is co-director of the *Data Justice Lab* and the co-founder of the *Big Data from the South* Initiative. Emiliano's books *Hybrid Media Activism* (2019) and *Data Justice* (2022) are seminal studies to make sense of power and resistance in the digital age. Emiliano has researched new media as complex ecologies that shape and are shaped by social movements, by exploring the relations between datafication, capitalism, governance and social justice. Emiliano's focus is on how these dynamics set different scenarios for domination and resistance in the Global North and the Global South.

Guest Speaker
Shehani Fernando, Award-winning immersive creator

Shehani is an award-winning immersive producer / director based in London, passionate about innovative forms of storytelling that combine documentary practice with new technologies. Among her productions, in 2019, Shehani produced 'The Waiting Room VR' with BAFTA-winning director Victoria Mapplebeck about her personal journey of living with breast cancer which premiered at the Venice Film Festival and won IDFA's Digital Storytelling award. Shehani worked at the Guardian, where from 2016-18 she directed VR experiences for the Guardian's in-house VR studio.

Presentations

Jake Pitre, Concordia University Montreal, Quebec, Canada
Rhetorical Imaginaries: Theoretical Approaches to Platform Futures
The GDPR and other regulatory initiatives, however imperfect, have recently intensified the feeling among major platforms that they must be intimately involved in any future regulation. This paper is interested in how international platform futures are codified through corporate discourse, granting insight not into what regulation will actually look like, or not only that, but instead into the rhetorical and sociocultural structures these companies seek to impose in the collective imaginary. This paper offers an invitation for us to conduct studies that take this future-building seriously as an ideological project of power, and a challenge of theory. Devon Powers argues for cultural studies scholars to take a futurist approach, whereby analysis reclaims talk of the future from those making decisions for us. From a theoretical perspective, then, what tools can we use to better understand how these companies are seeking to control the future

of political agency and ideology on platforms? More specifically, this paper offers a comparative example between policymaker and governmental rhetoric on the one hand and TikTok rhetoric on the other during ongoing discussions over that platform's use and regulation in Europe and North America, as a case study to reveal the geopolitical dimensions of this future-making project.

Dr Scott Wark, University of Kent
'Race, by Proxy'

In this paper, we use recent research we have been conducting on AI's impact on race and racialisation to reflect on the agency that platforms accord racialised subjects in our digital age. The capacity for AI and ML to make inferences about us using "proxy data" is arguably changing the nature of race and the operations of racialisation. In data science, a proxy is a feature that is used "in place of a variable that cannot be measured" (Upton & Cook, 2014). Proxies act as substitutes that can be used to infer, and therefore to act upon, an unknown piece of data. Taken individually, these substitutions can be inconsequential. At scale, they constitute a logic by which the world can be approximated or modelled, allowing AI and ML systems to measure and act upon that which is in excess of perception. This includes the category of race. Using a series of case studies, we offer an overview of the role that proxies play in transforming race and racialisation. We argue that AI and ML institute a post-big-data politics of race: what we have elsewhere called "racial formations as data formations" (Phan and Wark 2021b). We also argue that these "proxy logics" have political consequences. Proxy logics use data to sort us into contingent groupings: what are sometimes called "clusters" (Amoore, 2021) or "neighbourhoods" (Chun, 2018). These groupings often bear little relation to demographic categories – or, indeed, to our professed identities. Contemporary racial politics is usually conducted as what's known "identity politics." While acknowledging our debt to this paradigm, we argue that these new modes of racialisation operate in a different one: what we want to call a politics of proximity. To resist AI's capacity to racialise and discriminate, we need to figure out what this politics might entail.
Co-author: Dr Thao Phan (Monash University, Australia)

12.15-13.00
Lunch Break

13.00-15.00
Panel: Theoretical Perspectives
Chair > Dr Marco Guglielmo

Keynote
Dr Alex Williams, University of East Anglia
On Platform Hegemony: The Metapolitics of Digital Infrastructures

Alex is a political theorist and lecturer in digital media and society. Since the publication of the book *Inventing the Future, Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (2016), Alex has become a globally acknowledged theorist of how platform societies cement new hegemony and may enable unprecedented forms of resistance. These ideas are developed further in his most recent book *Hegemony Now: How Big Tech and Wall Street Won the World (And How We Win it Back)* (2022). Alex's theories are seminal contributions to interpreting the complexities of platform societies.

Guest Speaker
Dr Nikki Soo, TikTok

Nikki is a harmful content and digital well-being subject matter expert within TikTok's EU Public Policy Team. She engages in a wide range of work including mis/disinformation, hateful behaviour and digital well-being. Prior to joining TikTok, Nikki worked in academia specialising in the effects of digital technology on society, media and culture. She has previously worked at Ipsos MORI, Cardiff University and The University of Sheffield. She earned her PhD in Politics

from Royal Holloway, University of London. Her work has previously been published in The British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Journalism Studies, as well as The Conversation and The Independent.

Presentations

Antonia Alecu, University of Birmingham
Digital platforms as third spaces of gender performance and resistance
Within the discourse of dissent, third spaces are conceptualised as spaces of existence outside the usual social environments of the individual such as home and school/workplace within which the socialised agent performs a culturally pre-determined identity. Third spaces serve as safe and guarded communities unified by a common objective that does not prevail within the first spaces of existence. Digital platforms have progressively monopolised third spaces in the field of gender performance and liberation, leading the contestation of gender normativity in the societal sphere. This presentation will look at theoretical perspectives on the creation of new gender discourse on digital platforms and the productive capacity of such acts of resistance to generate new parameters of gender expression, arguing that they offer the precondition for challenging restrictive gender identities outside of third spaces. Employing a Foucauldian and poststructuralist feminist framework will allow for an analysis of gender discourse production that uncovers its historical and cultural construction, rather than a fixed 'natural' constitution grounded in a pre-discursive notion of truth. This will lead to an understanding of how constructed meaning is operationalised with a restrictive goal, opening up the space for a resurgence of subjugated identities in the digital space through the disengagement from preconstructed identities and the cultivation of new emancipated ones - thus, providing the prerequisite of wider cultural reformation of gender discourse.

Dr Mikael Andéhn, Royal Holloway
Exiting the rabbit hole
'Incels' (Involuntary celibates) have become a fixture of the discourse on problematic online groupings. In a recent contribution to the British Journal of Sociology O'Donnell and Shor (2022) argues for an understanding of this grouping as a terrorist organization with political objectives that can be captured under the rubric of 'male supremacy'. Based on a long-term engagement with the broader online 'Manosphere' figuration, I critique this construal of Incels based on the identification and exploration of an apparent paradox: The incel groupings accounting of the social reality the so-called 'Blackpill', is a fatalistic and profoundly deterministic view which posits that social hierarchies (such as those that Incels themselves find themselves at the bottom rung of) are fixed. Further, the Blackpill understanding of social reality extends this fatalism to its account of the potential for political change. If political change cannot be achieved through any means, what is the ideological motivation for Incel violence? The Incel radicalization process itself is marked by a conspicuous absence of the possibility of a political teleology. Its 'ideology' fails to meet the threshold conditions of a social imaginary with positive content. It so lacks an imagination of a 'better world'. Even the modality of engaging with Incel forums is one characterized by an acceleration and amplification of the technological milieus own pre-established and 'projective' subjectivity. 'Members' are ascribed a collective subjectivation, but not granted the power to co-determine the form of the resulting subject. Ultimately, the Incel grouping is a violent threat, but the danger it poses as an inspiration for mass-violence is far eclipsed by the danger it poses to its own members in the form of dissemination and amplification of suicide ideation. Incels are not terrorists, and arguably even the description of them as a non-theistic death cult is overly accommodating. Instead, we urgently require an understanding of the machinic and mediated nature of the Incel phenomenon, and rather than providing the antagonistic productivity enacted through entertaining Incel 'ideology' through critique, we might leave the rabbit hole and look to the material conditions that premise the Incel experience.

Paul Geyer, University of Leeds
The next ideological phase of social media: the subscription model and subscription subject
In this paper, I argue for the next ideological phase of social media. This will be demonstrated in two steps: first, how surveillance capitalism is creating stability, and since instability is necessary for capitalism's survival, social media is shifting (or at least supplementing Surveillance Capitalism) to a subscription-based model to re-introduce instability. Second, with this shift to a subscription model, a new social media subject is created: the "Indentured-enjoyment"

subject. To justify my arguments, I will draw heavily on the Žižekian tradition, to highlight how Surveillance Capitalism is changing. Surveillance Capitalism and algorithmic learning is heading towards stability. Capitalism's history demonstrates that it needs to be unstable; unstable in the sense that it needs to constantly revolutionise and adapt to new forms of profit, means of production and of ideological and social relations. As Karl Marx stated: "the true barrier to capital, is capital itself". The stability being created comes from the extraction of user's data, algorithmic learning, constant surveillance, and building a better profile of the individual; in essence, from Surveillance Capitalism itself. Furthermore, by developing Alenka Zupančič's two-level surplus I argue, this stability can be seen in the social media subject: a tension of overidentifying with the big Other (social media in this circumstance) and user's surplus-enjoyment being filled in by Surveillance Capitalism. I will utilise Shoshana Zuboff's definition of Surveillance Capitalism; particularly, her argument that Surveillance Capitalism thrives on a "no exit" situation. I reinterpret ""no exit"" to mean stability. From here, I flip the perspective of asking what capitalism's next move is, instead of responding to the "no exit" situation. Therefore, I predict a shift to a subscription model that can re-introduce instability by providing new methods of surplus-value extraction, and, from my ideological, Žižekian angle, a new ideological subject.

15.15-17.00
Roundtable
Future Challenges and Research Agendas

Venue
Senate House - University of London, Malet Street, London.
Rooms 103 (Registration and catering) and 104 (ECRs Workshop, Panels and Roundtable)

Hosted by
The New Political Communication Unit and The Gender Institute
Royal Holloway University of London

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