

GENDERED CULTURES IN PLATFORM ECONOMIES: ENTERTAINMENT, EXPERTISE AND ONLINE SELFHOOD

20th - 21st November 2023

ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

Avenida das Forças Armadas, 1649-026

Lisbon, Portugal

CALL FOR PAPERS

There is a hopeful narrative running through the scholarship around media and communication studies, arguing that the internet and social media are means of enhancing political and civic participation. While to a certain extent this is the case, at least in the earlier internet days, the rise of gigantic, privately owned, digital platforms as major sites for regulating and disciplining contemporary production, consumption, work and play further gestures towards a global entertainification of online cultures. Looking, for instance, at the most popular influencers in Italian media platforms (Miconi, 2023), we can observe a contrast with recent trends in Internet studies arguing that social media play a key role in mobilizing people in civic and wider political terms (e.g., Vaccari & Valeriani 2021). Coaching advice, parodies, food, fashion and sports seem to be overwhelmingly capturing both the imaginary and the production and consumption cultures of the main media platforms at the expense for example, of news and political debate. As data infrastructures that capitalize on the user's time, labour and attention (Poell, Nieborg, Duffy, 2022), platforms only care about keeping the user in their space; in this regard, the circulation of online entertainment is more appealing than civic debates.

Horizon 2020 "Europe in a changing world – Inclusive, Innovative and Reflective Societies",

Research and Innovation, Call Innovation 10/2020: Evolving Media Landscapes and Europeanisation / Reference Number: 101004488

This conference looks at the **gendered dimensions of platform economies** focusing specifically on how entertainment interweaves with expertise in the construction of contemporary femininities and masculinities. Platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook enable a seemingly democratization of expertise, as anyone could become an expert in any matter possible among niche communities, ranging from wine tasters, perfume specialists, life coaches, fitness trainers, dieticians and health consultants to sex therapists, pick up artists, mindfulness gurus, city guides and gastronomic bloggers. In this context, popular feminism intertwines with popular misogyny as online media give visibility to emancipatory discourses while simultaneously limit the effectiveness of collective action (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

The entertainification of expert knowledge in the 2000s begins with the proliferation of television talent shows, including song, fashion and cooking contests, that brought to the public realm the creative celebrity-expert as an arbiter of good taste. The occupation of cooking, to take one example, from being a behind the scenes, domestic, unpaid, free and feminine labour became, in the form of the celebrity chef, a creative, if not artistic, genius-male endeavor that can potentially lead to stardom. These chefs are presented as having their own unique artistic vision, cosmopolitan identities and cool instagrammable personas. To the abundance of visible professional experts, we can add the widespread micro-expertise of amateurs found online and offline on trivial or nontrivial matters, from how to raise a child to how to grow cactuses.

Aspirational labour and aspirational consumption in media platforms has a strong gendered dimension. Erin Duffy (2017) argues that the aspirational (unpaid) labour of creative entrepreneurs in media platforms is primarily performed by women while aspirational (curated) consumption creates particular fantasies of femininity, masculinity, queerness and other gender identities. At the same time, while platforms can offer visibility to progressive gender causes in public debate, they can instigate a relation of 'cruel optimism' vis-a-vis ideal gender constructions, to use Laurent Berlant's term, as the latter becomes a desirable object which at the same time creates anxieties and frustration by being unrealizable (2012). The exposure of gendered and classed selves to expert entertainment content, from eating food of celebrity chefs to training with fitness gurus, perpetuates a feeling of self-inferiority against gender and class success.

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This conference explores gender in the context of expert entertainment cultures in platform economics. We look for **250-word abstracts** in the following themes:

- Optimizing gender and sexuality
- Optimizing womanhood and motherhood
- Life coaches, self-help gurus and self-curating
- Manosphere, pick up artists and new masculinities
- Prank videos and sexism
- Queer identities between entrepreneurialism and empowerment
- 'How-to-Succeed' guides and cultures
- Growing plants and pets
- The performance of gender in animal videos (cuteness/ strength)
- Confidence culture and the psy-industries
- Feel-good economy, therapeutic cultures and neo-spiritualism
- The gendered self as a project and work of art
- Fitness, beauty and the body
- Discipline and self-restraint
- Amateur and professional labour
- Individualized gendered practices Vs. collective mobilisation

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TIMELINE

9 June 2023	Abstract submission deadline
14 July 2023	Acceptance/Rejection notification
8 September 2023	Registration to the conference
20-21 November 2023	Conference in Lisbon

To submit your abstract, please send an email to: conference@eumeplat.eu

Further details and updated information are available [here](#).

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About the project

EUMEPLAT – European Media Platforms: assessing positive and negative externalities for European culture is a Research and Innovation project funded under the **Horizon 2020 Programme**, aiming at investigating the role of media platforms in fostering or dismantling European identity.

Drawing on the assumption that European dimension has rarely been dominant in media history and focusing on the “platformization” process and its positive and negative externalities, the main research question is whether or not the **new platforms are making European culture more European**.

Through a multidisciplinary approach and the analysis of relevant indicators related to the production and consumption of media contents and to the representation of sensitive issues – namely gender and migration – the research team looks for similarities and specificities on a national, regional and European level. The data and results collected are also investigated to come out with **recommendations** addressed to the policy-makers on the evolution of the European media landscapes.

The project runs from **1st March 2021 to 29th February 2024** and is carried out by **12 partners from 10 countries**: Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione (Italy) // coordinator; Leibniz-Institut für Medienforschung | Hans-Bredow Institut (Germany); New Bulgarian University (Bulgaria); UNIMED – Unione delle Università del Mediterraneo (Italy); Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Spain); Universiteit Gent (Belgium); Bilkent Üniversitesi Vakıfı (Turkey); National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece); Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (Portugal); Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Italy); Foreningen IKED (Sweden); Univerzita Karlova (Czech Republic).

For more information, please visit the project [website](#) and social media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)) and subscribe to the [newsletter](#). The main publications produced in the framework of the project are available in the EUMEPLAT Community on [Zenodo](#).

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