



Hiper-mediatização, vigilância e previsibilidade: como os limites da sociedade estão a mudar.¹

Hyper-mediatization, surveillance and predictability: how the boundaries of society are changing.

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Has the increasing mediatization of everyday life reshaped the contours of society? Does the society that has been mediatized accept these changes or is it able to discuss them critically?

To answer these questions, this paper will analyse mediatization in three social areas that have important repercussions on the shape, meanings and contours of society: migration, work and rights. This will be the starting point for understanding whether and how hyper-mediatization can intervene in the structure of society. It will also be shown that there is often a direct link between hyper-mediatization and surveillance. Apps, platforms, new technologies allow for unprecedented data collection and the possibility of tracking and monitoring movements and interests. The question will be whether the ultimate goal of these surveillance technologies is precisely tracking or,

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rather, the predictability that gives even greater power. In this landscape, therefore, it becomes fundamental to ask whether individuals and society are able to maintain their power of action while taking advantage of the benefits that mediatization brings.

Migration - experience and narrative - has always been a mediatized environment. From letters to telephones and satellite TV, to the Internet and e-mail, to pre-paid sim cards and social media: the evolution of the media system has brought about important changes to the migration phenomenon, fostering stories, maintaining relations with the life left behind and facilitating movement. If migratory conditions have undoubtedly improved, what has been the impact on outgoing and incoming societies? However, the increase in media technologies available to migrants is also accompanied by the increase in technologies used on migrants. Indeed, technologies related to surveillance and biometric recognition systems, identification through computer systems that cross biological and behavioural characteristics with data acquired through databases and algorithms, are constantly being used (Georgiou & Chouliaraki, 2020; Madianou, 2019). Digitalization has led to the “datafication of human mobility”, making everything about migration measurable and quantifiable. The technological infrastructure for data collection and analysis used by governments to redistribute migrants has not only made migration quantifiable but also calculable, predictable (Gamez, 2020). Borders are no longer seen as geographical entities, but as political and technological entities. What is the role of mediatization, but also of actors in this case?

Amazon workers, gig workers, Uber and Foodora drivers (Yu, et al., 2022; Delfanti, 2021). Some sectors of the world of work have always had mediatization as a central aspect of their being. What has changed, with Covid-19, is that while some professions were mainly based in the offline world, it has now been possible to catapult some of them online as well. So much so, that some scholars speak of Technostress, caused by this cognitive and digital tool overload that causes this feeling of anxiety and



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lack of freedom (Mirbabaie et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2020), even in relation to those who are 'forced' to be online to work. In the case of Amazon workers, for instance, one can see how hyper-mediatization is necessarily linked to increased surveillance of workers. There have been many studies conducted and criticisms related to the use of technologies, some of them wearable, that provided employers and others with the ability to track workers' movements, including location or breaks. Within a system that seems to be moving more and more in this direction, how can workers respond to this imposition?

Finally, the question of rights, first and foremost the right to privacy and information (free and without danger). When the US Supreme Court overturned the landmark *Roe vs Wade* ruling on abortion rights, dozens of articles and social media posts were published on how to keep abortion research private. American women started to delete period-tracking apps and on TikTok the word abortion was replaced by new words. Period-tracking apps, not unlike other platforms, collect and store user data. The fear is therefore that this data, if shared, could be used to build cases against those seeking abortion. Already in 2019, a study in the *British Medical Journal* (Grundy et al., 2019) had denounced how most medical apps routinely shared the information they collected, or rather, extrapolated. The issue of privacy in relation to the use of apps and platforms has been central for years. Abortion is just one of the most recent examples of this intertwining of hypermediatisation and surveillance, which can work in favour of governments. In reality, it is a broader conversation about the amount of personal information a smartphone, apps and platforms can collect, which becomes even more sensitive when people's rights are at stake.

Hyper-mediatization lies precisely in this: living a life not with media, but in media (Deuze, 2011). On the one hand, it facilitates and improves the conditions or some aspects of our lives; on the other hand, we must be aware of the profoundly ambiguous, problematic and critical nature, especially considering the interplay of



powers that it is able to trigger within societies. Thus, migration, labour and rights represent fertile ground for critically discussing whether and how the relationship between hyper-mediatization and surveillance takes place and where this control can then turn into predictability. Today's society, its structures and balances, have undoubtedly changed; the aim of this article is to analyse what impact mediatization has on this change and how society itself, or rather, parts of it, can still continue to have its own power.

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