



GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS

WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

October 15-16, 2021

Sapienza, University of Rome (online and in-person)
Department of Communication and Social Research

PANEL 3

FEMINISM AND THE MEDIA

Chairs:

Milly Buonanno (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

Speakers:

- Karolina Leakovic (University of Zagreb, Croatia)
- Emanuela Naclerio (University of Milan, Italy)
- Idil Engindeniz (Galatasaray University, Italy)
- Arianna Mainardi (University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy), Alberta Giorgi (University of Bergamo, Italy)
- Gaunqin He (Utrecht University, Netherlands)



Marginalized but not voiceless: the rise of non-profit feminist journalism in Croatia

Karolina Leakovic (University of Zagreb, Croatia)

Abstract

Neo-conservative tendencies have been prominent in the last decade in countries of East-Central Europe, Hungary and Poland in particular (Kováts 2016). Legislative attempts to decrease women's reproductive rights have quickly spread all over the region, using media- among other actors, such as newly established non-governmental organizations- to shape the public sentiment and exercise pressure over decision-makers. Parallel to that, a feminist resistance movement has taken roots, leading to what is now known as "women's strikes" (Kubisa and Wojnicka 2018), as well as other protest actions, including "women's marches" on International Women's Day.

With a strong tradition of feminist movement established in Yugoslavia (Lóránd 2018) and a heritage of progressive media (Majstorović 2018), a wave of feminist non-profit media has been observed in Croatia, starting in late 2000's. However, social, political and economic circumstances under which new feminist media, digital-first mostly, emerged in Croatia, were relatively uncomparable to Yugoslav times.

This research is aimed at exploring reasons for establishing non-profit feminist media in Croatia, as well as organizational and professional constraints defining their position within Croatian media landscape. Information will be gathered by interviews with journalists from those outlets, marking the first attempt to understand the position of feminist viewpoints in meaning-making.



Amleta: a case study of feminist media production in the Italian artistic field

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Abstract

In the media and digital space, feminism has been increasingly popularised over the past twenty years (Mendes et al., 2019) and it has been underlined the often-ambiguous relation between mainstream feminism, neoliberalism and market-led practices that aims to increase women's entrepreneurial sensibility (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020; McRobbie, 2020). In a digital media space where post-feminist gendered sensibilities are largely unquestioned (Duffy & Hund, 2015), collective and political media productions are often pushed outside of mainstream cultural spaces.

Even if the cultural sector appears to be structured around narratives of equality, coolness and diversity (Elias et al., 2017; Gill, 2002), working practices that reproduce gender, race and class inequalities are widespread in cultural work (Dean, 2008; Friedman et al., 2017; Simon, 2019). Furthermore, in showbusiness environments, women suffer the effects of cultural underrepresentation and misrepresentation, working and earning less than their male colleagues (Bertolini & Luciano, 2011). The outburst of Covid-19 pandemic has led the performing arts' workers to mobilise and question the structure of their working environment. This paper considers feminist digital activism during Covid-19 exploring the Instagram activities of Amleta, a group of feminist actresses and activists based in Milan that mobilise intersectional knowledges and sensibilities on and from the performing arts' sector. Amleta's strategies negotiate with a digital context pervaded by neo-liberal and post-feminist sensibilities (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020), configuring its space as a site of struggle for equality in the performing arts' sector. Using digital data collected from Amleta's Instagram activity and from qualitative interviews conducted with activists, the analysis focuses on the group's informational activism (McKinney, 2020) and on the affective role of feminist assembly (Gago, 2020) during Covid-19 times. The paper reflects on the group's digital strategies in their cultural and affective relationships with intersectional feminist protest and post-feminist sensibilities in a context marked by pandemic outbreak and by structural inequalities at work.



How and why the feminists use the podcast area in Turkish?

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Abstract

The usage of the podcast raised remarkably in 2020, the year of the pandemic COVID-19¹. According to the report of the podcast measurement company Chartable, it is possible to talk about “The Golden Age of Podcast” without forgetting that it was also said in 2014², in 2015³ or in 2019⁴. However, the report shows that “2020 saw a more than 280% increase in the creation of new podcasts”. As for the content in Turkish it tripled in 2020 and the new podcast device growth was more than five times than the past year. This is one of the reasons to make us work on podcast. Another reason is that “(...) RSS-based functionalities – such as podcasting – are less prone to algorithmic agency”⁵ which makes a research less vulnerable by the effect of algorithms.

As we are witnessing the raise of podcast and the increase of women rights in Turkey, we would like to research on an eventual feminist podcast sphere in Turkish. To do so, we will list all Turkish podcasts found via the key words “feminism” and “feminist” (in Turkish) to be able to give a general quantitative view. To have a deeper knowledge on the subject, we will analyze the first publications sensed to give information about the producers, their objectives, and the eventual content of the future podcasts. Then, we will contact producers to understand their motivations for podcasting. We will also try to understand if the podcast is / can be a way to bring together feminists via a voice, via the feminist voice, who are surrounded by a hostile environment created by State’s politics.

1 <https://chartable.com/blog/2020-year-in-review>

2 https://archives.cjr.org/behind_the_news/is_this_the_golden_age_of_podc_1.php

3 Berry, R. 2015. A Golden Age of Podcasting? Evaluating Serial in the Context of Podcast Histories. *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*. 22(2), pp.170–178.

4 Chartable ushers in a “golden age of podcasts” with charts and data <https://rainnews.com/chartable-ushers-in-a-golden-age-of-podcasts-with-charts-and-data/>

5 Markus Lundström & Tomas Poletti Lundström (2021) Podcast ethnography, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 24:3, 289-299, DOI:10.1080/13645579.2020.1778221



“Should we discuss our privileges?” Feminism and religion in the digital context

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Abstract

In the contemporary mediated world, digital media are one of the spaces in which the negotiation of meaning of gender relationships takes place. Digital media in fact contribute to the reconfiguration of the processes of inclusion and exclusion of different minoritized subjectivities in the public sphere. Also, they contribute to unpack and discuss the Eurocentrism, sexism and whiteness that characterise online dynamics in the Global North. In this context, digital media may also offer an opportunity to challenge, negotiate and craft specific religious identities and redesign the power relationships built upon them. Research shows that digital media showcase a variety of gendered subjectivities and foster process of political participation for women and LGBTQI+ people, especially within the context of contemporary feminist mobilizations. However, studies also point out how the mediation offered by social media contributes to the reproduction of norms related to gender, colour, process of racialisation and religion, supporting mediated processes of othering.

In this contribution, we focus on the construction of feminist discourses in the mediation operated by Instagram. Drawing on the hashtag #feminismointersezionale on Instagram, the analysis aims to investigate whether and how the online feminist discourse interweaves religious and cultural issues, interrogates cultural and political practices of racialization and broadens the mainstream by pushing its boundaries. More specifically, by means of digital ethnography we focus on the role of Islam in the contemporary feminist digital intersectional discourse. The research contributes to (1) the analysis of the dynamics between digital and legacy media, by showing the mechanisms of voice and subjectivation; (2) the debate on contemporary feminisms, by pointing out the hybridization and construction of nuanced feminist identities and alliances. Analysing the relationship between feminism and religion in the online space allows pointing out how religion - and Islam in particular - challenges the articulation of the intersectional feminist discourse, by pointing out contradictions and ambivalences related to the online processes of othering and racialization, and exposing the power practices occurring in the digital environment.



The Predicament of 'Sisters': Neoliberal Feminism, Ageism and Subjugation in Post- Socialist China

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Abstract

This paper will examine how the middle-aged women are represented in a neoliberal feminism- oriented reality TV programme-- Sister Who Makes Waves (Chengfengpo de jiejie, SWMW) in post- socialist China. It is the first time that the diverse expression of girl power and femininity are intensively demonstrated on TV screens, receiving highly popularity and controversy among the public. Drawing on a range of relevant literature, the study probes the terrain on which post-feminist and neoliberal feminist discourses are shaping public culture in China and sheds light on how self- articulations and renegotiations of gender identities are enabled. Based on a critical reflection on subjectivity (Foucault et al., 2000; Butler, 1997), this project is guided by the main research question: how and to what extent neoliberal feminism is represented in the reality show? Through the analysis of the power relations among the 'sisters', the audience and the backstage mechanism, sub-questions for discussion also include: whether the sisters' actions and performance in the show are conspiracy or resistance to neoliberal capitalism? What do the sisters and the show SWMW reflect the predicament of Chinese women?

The study will look into the first season of SWMW aired in 2020, through Critical Discourse Analysis, together with some multimodal analysis on the interaction between lyrics, musical attributes and visual elements, to evaluate the rules, power relations and the ways of women's self-empowerment and self- expression. We argue that SWMW constructs neoliberal feminist discourse through the media, proposing the predicaments of women in contemporary China-- the practice of stimulating women to be self- reliant and self- disciplined literally act as a complicit role in feeding male privilege, consumerism and neoliberal capitalism.