MEDIÁLNÍ STUDIA

MEDIA STUDIES

Multiplicity of Media Choices and Privatised Mobility in Quarantine
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MULTIPLICITY OF MEDIA CHOICES AND PRIVATISED MOBILITY IN QUARANTINE

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with specific 'polymedia repertoires' of young people with the characteristics of their changing, adaptive and often parallel/simultaneous movement across different platforms and legacy media within their daily interactions during quarantine. Audiencing practices where it is especially important to examine relationships with technologies in contemporary media manifold were approached through the analysis of the media diaries of young people, aged between 21 and 25 years. The conclusions of the analysis point to a technological/media transformation, a transformation of practices in everyday life and a radical mediatisation which plays an important part in the changing generational structure of feeling. This paper argues that a generation-specific relationship with technologies forms a generation-specific structure of feeling or specific subject cultures that develop as by-products of deep mediatisation, in which digital media, especially during quarantine, expanded into all spheres of their social life.

Keywords: polymedia repertoires ▪ quarantine ▪ media diaries ▪ young people

1.   INTRODUCTION

In contemporary media environments, the radical integration of technologies into daily life can only be analysed by considering both aspects of communication—textual/symbolic and material/artificial, hence the practical aspect as well. Under contemporary conditions, it is especially crucial for every audiencing analysis to also examine relationships with technologies in contemporary media manifolds. Couldry and Hepp (2017, p. 5) called this a shift towards materialist phenomenology of the social world, where both symbolic and material aspects of technological practices are included in media consumption analysis. Akin to Kittler's (1999/1986) 'technomaterialism' and a descendant of 'cultural materialism' proposed by Williams (1980), the notion stands as a designation of considering media as technology and cultural form

simultaneously.[1] To paraphrase Williams's 'cultural materialist' view of television analysis (1990/1974), smartphone usage concerns as much the cell phone technology as a material artifact and the practice of handling it, as it concerns the practice of using the phone as a symbolic cultural form as well as interpretative and production strategies related to these symbolic forms. Therefore, as McLuhan (2004/1964) observed a few decades ago, the sheer materiality of the media should also be understood as a message.

This 'deep mediatization', as Couldry and Hepp (2017, pp. 53–56) called the third wave of mediatisation or the contemporary complex digital media environment, is a stage in the civilisation process and a result of various mediatisation waves in the past. Against this backdrop, modern technological society should be understood as a historical process marking the increasingly deepening technological dependence and the constantly intensifying influence of mediatisation on the functioning of all social entities and their interrelationships. When it comes to empirical studies of 'audiencing' practices during deep mediatisation, the concept of communicative figurations has especially taken root in the German intellectual milieu; communicative figurations may be viewed as conceptual tools enabling one to 'study how the transformations that we relate to the term mediatization actually take place' (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018, p. 18). The concept derives from Elias's figurational sociology (1978, 2000) and draws on the assumption that, rather than an individual, humanity or society, objects of sociological research are a group of individuals and a long-term transformation of figurations that they form with each other. While relationships, thus, constitute the primary social ontological category, Bourdieu and Elias were paradigmatic thinkers investigating social phenomena through the optics of relationships. More importantly, Elias 'grasps the role that material infrastructures play /.../ and insists on thinking about the consequences of that material infrastructure, of technology, from the point of view of the human beings entangled within them and their *human* goal' (Couldry, 2022, p. 12).

The paper begins with the assumption that media practices cannot be validly treated as distinct and unrelated practices/platforms and that digital media operate and are used as an integrated structure or as polymedia[2] repertoires (Madianou, 2014; Tagg & Lyons, 2021). In this situation, the media encourage certain genre-based practices of use and production in relation to each other. Therefore, polymedia, as an integrated structure of capabilities, is not only the naming of a media environment but also the use of these capabilities to manage relationships and emotions. In

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1   As regards the tradition of media studies, mention ought to be made of authors such as Roger Silverstone, Paddy Scannell and David Morley.

2   A polymedia environment is formed when certain conditions, such as accessibility, affordability and digital literacy, are met. Here, we draw upon the concept of polymedia (Madianou & Miller, 2013; Madianou, 2014), which represents an attempt to name an integrated media structure in which each medium is defined and has meaning only in relation to other media and in which media selection is a social act that involves normativity, definitions of the situation and social conventions.

the context of this research approach—which is a result of epistemological paradigmatic changes as well as of new audiencing practices where people move between platforms—the aim of this article is to analyse the changes that occurred in students' communication practices and media consumption, as well as in the communication characteristics and relations in this 'figuration', under the severe restrictions[3] during the COVID-19 pandemic and to draw tentative conclusions regarding the cultural and social implications of these transformations. Media diaries were used as a method, as they provide 'unique possibilities to approach the mediatized life worlds of people, and to empirically assess individuals' complex media practices in times of digitalization' (Wagner et al., 2022, p. 65).

The case study of audiencing as a cultural practice that cannot be investigated without considering the material and technological context in which it takes place focused on a group of students as a mediatised figuration, that is, a 'figuration of individuals that share a certain meaningful belonging that provides a basis for action and orientation-in-common' (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 168). What distinguishes a group of individuals as a figuration from that as a simple group is the existence or absence of a network of interdependences and a figuration matrix with an individual as its part.

The quarantine (lockdown), as a way of tackling the pandemic, brought about a transformation in the space–time of everyday routine. The physical and social differentiation of the spaces of everyday life (work, leisure, entertainment, private sphere, public sphere, front stage, backstage, etc.) collapsed. According to Fuchs (2020), it was difficult to organise day-to-day life in this convergent space of the physical home, which had turned into a supra-locale of what had once been separate spaces of everyday life. During the lockdown, the gradual blurring of distinction between spaces that had been advanced by the neoliberal organisation of work[4] and the pressure of constant availability was suddenly taken to its extreme. In this regard, the Corona crisis can primarily be viewed as a crisis of space and time, a state of racing stillness, as Virilio (2012) and Rosa (2015) indicated. According to Rosa (2015), high modernity is characterised by fragmented and contingent temporality that turns life into a series of short-term projects and where preservation of the status quo relies on constant acceleration of different social dimensions (from economic growth to constant innovation). To capture this contradiction (where the status quo is maintained through constant acceleration of change and growth – a so-called mode of dynamic stabilisation), he used Virilio's notion of racing stillness – stagnation at top

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3   In Slovenia, these were above all the restrictions of movement to municipalities and that on crossing the state border, the closure of schools and faculties, the restriction on night movement, the closure of all social venues (bars, night clubs, etc.) and the prohibition of all cultural and sports events (concerts, competitions, etc.).

4   For a discussion on a general argument about the acceleration of life in late capitalism and about a dramatic restructuring of workplaces in the face of economic forces, see Wajcman (2015), especially chapter 5, where not only spatial aspects but also the relationship between work and time in the context of digital technologies is critically approached.

speed – to describe the complementarity of compulsion to change and the tendency to freeze. During the lockdown, we faced time and spatial shrinking – the space was radically reduced and mostly confined to one's own apartment, and we lived through a general deacceleration of everyday life, economy, mobility, etc. However, while there was a reduction in physical and material movement and speed, there was a corresponding acceleration in our digital lives. This had been going on for some time, but it was greatly intensified by the lockdown during the pandemic.

Meanwhile, ordinary interaction rituals were suspended once digital communication pushed aside the physical aspects of sociality and bodily interactions among people. As a result of mask-wearing and transferring face-to-face interactions to digital platforms, a whole variety of cues (facial, bodily, etc.) that are normally used in interaction rituals in direct contact and are crucial for sociality weakened or completely vanished from communication. Regular performance of formal and informal rituals in physical presence is also critical for the preservation of institutions. As Božić observes, drawing on the micro-interactional sociology of Collins (2020), the suspension of interaction ritual chains at all levels of social reality leads to the problem of lacking emotional energy and thinning solidarity because digital media only enable a limited and strictly complementary maintenance of interaction ritual chains. The diminished ceremonial nature, the blurred distinction between Goffman's notions of front stage and backstage and the reduction of physical and direct communication have undoubtedly had a transformative effect on social life. In other words, in quarantine, most of this life unfolds in 'synthetic situations' (listening to lectures on Zoom, playing video games on the internet, flirting on Tinder, etc.), where technical means are implied as 'intermediaries/channels that allow access to other contexts' (Knorr-Cetina, 2009).

2.   COMMUNICATIVE FIGURATIONS IN SYNTHETIC SITUATIONS

'Relational shift' counteracts methodological individualism and promises to transcend useless dualisms in social sciences regarding the relationship between an individual and society, between structure and functioning and between mind and body. Therefore, Hepp and Hasebrink (2018), too, believed that the concept of figurations can link the micro-analysis of practices performed by individual actors to the meso-analysis of individual areas and to macro-social questions. The authors defined communicative figurations as typical cross-media patterns of interweaving through communication practices. They provided an example of family members who, although physically separate, remain connected and maintain family relations with the help of multimodal communication practices—from phoning and emailing to content sharing on social media platforms. In contrast, organisations as communicative figurations exist through both databases and communication via the internet and other classical channels. In addition to communication practices involving eye contact, Schrøder (2018) highlighted the interweaving of communicative figurations

with media at the following three levels or, rather, aspects: the entire media environment available at a given moment, media selection used in a certain social domain and media repertoires used by individual actors in everyday life. This manifoldness of modern media generates remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999), where new media build on and recreate the previous ones and vice versa, while old media—from printed books to television—which defined the past civilisations/empires (see Innis, 2018/1951), remain in use.

Couldry and Hepp (2017, pp. 170–172) distinguished between two key types of collectivities in relation to media: media-based collectivities (e.g. online groups that can only be formed with the help of media) and mediatised collectivities that are not constituted by media and can therefore exist without them (e.g. families and peer groups) but that are nevertheless increasingly constructed and formed through media-mediated communication. It is not only common communication practices and personal interactions that define 'networked media collectivity' but also the question of power as the key aspect of communicative figurations. Rather than being static, these only begin to be articulated in an ongoing communication process during which rules are also being produced communicatively. Thus, figurations work as forces of empowerment or disempowerment by giving voice to some and excluding others (see Hepp et al., 2014).

Therefore, communicative figurations have a defined constellation[5] of actors that can be understood as their structural basis either through close-knit communities or loosely connected groups blurring traditional social boundaries (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). In addition, each communicative figuration has predominant frames of importance that steer its constitutive practices. These frames define the topics and, hence, the characteristics of a communicative figuration. However, this also concerns specific communication practices that are interwoven with other social practices and ordinarily entangled with a media ensemble (Hepp & Hasebrink, 2018). In the given case (students enrolled in the same faculty and attending the same study programme), it is a close-knit, mid-sized group with a strong group identification that, on one hand, frequently communicates via Facebook Messenger and Zoom or Facebook Messenger videocalls for work and, on the other hand, shares media repertoires and referential frames. Friemel and Bixler (2018) stressed that mediatisation signifies not only gradual quantitative changes regarding media usage, but that the rise of digital technologies and their everywhereness change the way of relating and contribute to the transformation of ways of constructing social subjectivities and collectivities, for example, to the transition from spatially located to networked lifeworlds (see Rasmussen, 2014).

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5   A key definitional characteristic and analytical advantage of communicative figurations is scalability, which provides analytical flexibility to the application of figurations ranging from 'the smallest everyday grouping, such as a family or a municipal committee, to the largest (supra)national collectivity, such as a country's public sphere, or the global financial market' (Schrøder, 2018, p. 410).

3. CASE STUDY: ANALYSIS OF MEDIA DIARIES DURING THE QUARANTINE

One of the most appropriate methods to articulate deep mediatisation in a specific communicative formation during the quarantine is the use of a media diary because it enables researchers to tackle the complexity of communicative interactions in everyday life and the question of integrating media and social life. Issues of technological structuring of everyday life, perception of space and time related to the use of technology, sociability and structure of feeling framed using technology, demanded a detailed description of the course of their day and all routine and ritual micro-situations associated with it and around technology, as well as the embodied experience of technology. The most important advantage of this method is that it does not focus on a single media platform but rather offers insights into the interweaving of complex media repertoires in both mobile and static situations (see Berg & Düvel, 2012). In particular, as Wagner et al. (2022, pp. 57–58) highlighted, the diaries allow for a joined and continuous observation of media use episodes and situations that do not stand out of but are an integral part of individuals' way of living. Media diaries can grasp the subjective meanings allocated to media use, the past and present experiences people have (made) with media and the relationality of media practices to people's everyday lives at the same time (ibid.). Methods such as recall questionnaires on one's average or customary media practice are not applicable to our research questions, which aim to probe the technological structuring of everyday life and the embeddedness of media practices into other daily cultural practices. In a situation of intensive mediatisation, the method of memory retrieval would also pose an epistemological issue because the use of media technology is intricately linked to the daily routine and forms its integral part.[6]

In this study, 39 third-year students of Media and Communication Studies maintained their media diaries in April 2020, specifically during the first quarantine and distance learning, and 27 students maintained their diaries in April 2021, when most restrictions were lifted. The additional value of including the second group of students lies in their reflection on differences between both years. Each student completed their diary with a short (two-page) analysis and reflection on their practice, which indicated the evaluation regime and legitimation strategies framing their consumption. Aged between 21 and 25 years (the majority 22 years) at the time of journaling, all diary keepers represented the so-called 'natives' of new media technologies. With journaling, they aimed to establish how their everyday lives were structured

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6   As an example of a recall questionnaire and individual evaluation of one's practices (e.g. the number of hours using social media daily or weekly), see the survey of the National Institute of Public Health (Gabrovec et al., 2020). Two assumptions that are found problematic for the media-related segment of this research but are nevertheless implicitly built into it are the assumption that the respondents (students at Slovenian universities in the time of the quarantine) clearly divided their time between work and leisure and the implicit assumption concerning the potentially pathological nature of new media strictly at the level of individual practices and individual solutions (i.e. methodological individualism).

through media technologies during the quarantine and what forms of sociality they developed to identify possible effects of this deep mediatisation and consequences of the de-differentiation of spatial distinctions and to determine the radical limitation of unmediated physical interaction, including the transfer of teaching 'genres' (lectures, seminars) to the digital space.

To make their diaries formally comparable, the participants maintained detailed records of their everyday media practices in a predetermined table, which nonetheless allowed for individually adapted entries; its organisation into thematic clusters also enabled the participants' answers to be both personal and structured. The diary keepers recorded their media consumption regarding (a) the use of a single media platform or several media/applications simultaneously; (b) the space, situation and circumstances under which media/technologies were used and (c) the contents that they consumed, used or produced through media or applications. While we are not concerned about the reliability of data in the diaries, they vary, to some extent, in terms of complexity and quality. Some entrances were more condensed, while some were detailed. Among the limitations of our approach is sample bias, the first being certainly generational and class/status homogeneity since the sample represents a student population of social sciences, and the other is gender bias, as almost 75% of the writers were women. Thus, the results should be interpreted as an illustration of a theoretical argument. Although diaries crafted for research can lack intrinsic motivation and focus might be influenced by the researchers' demands, as Wagner et al. (2022, p. 59) note, all our participants were highly motivated and all of them returned the diaries. In their reflections, they showed a high degree of reflectivity, noting also some limitations of the method, with some suggesting that an application tracking their media consumption would be more suitable in the future.

3.1.   Intensifying Existing Mediatised Practices and the Emergence of New Forms

Not surprisingly, the analysis of media diaries kept during the quarantine points to intensified integration of technologies into everyday life and its mediatisation. As previous research (Luthar & Oblak Črnič, 2017; Luthar & Pušnik, 2021) has shown, the most important characteristics of integrating technologies into the daily life of this particular age group are (a) the radical personalisation of consumption, (b) its integration into everyday life, (c) the permanent use of media/media technologies, which promotes (d) the fragmentation of attention and a permanent state of partial attention and (e) the naturalisation of social media as a 'space' of sociality. As Wagner et al. (2022, pp. 53–54) emphasised, the importance of the situatedness of media use and media choice within broader everyday contexts has become more apparent and less easy to ignore than in previous media environments and given earlier media practices, while media use is increasingly taking place as non-exclusive.

During the quarantine, too, a key characteristic of daily media use was the constant (day-long) access to social media platforms. The continuous flow of irregular

interactions helps us maintain the 'feeling of permanent connection, an impression that the link can be activated at any time and that one can thus experience the other's engagement in the relationship at any time' (Licoppe, 2004, p. 141). In this way, a permanent connection is clearly integrated into everyday life to the point of being completely normalised; or, as already stated, the naturalisation of 'cultural connectivity' creates the impression that gathering on social media platforms is a natural form of sociality and expressive collectivity. Irena (23) thus concluded that 'it had taken me no more than three weeks to develop an incredible co-dependency with my phone, which is (I am proud to say) not something that I am normally used to. [...] I can say with certainty that my cell phone does not represent any of that under normal circumstances'. Media technologies thus became an integral part of all other social practices, including maintaining contacts, which are otherwise performed through face-to-face interactions. Despite differences in selecting platforms and contents, all participants used the smartphone as the predominant means of communication that accompanied them twenty-four hours a day. They woke up to it, held on to it throughout the day and used it while performing other activities (listening to lectures, watching TV, etc.; like Špela (21), for example: 'Often, this also holds for Netflix because I frequently check my cell phone while watching a series and reply to messages or merely check the latest on social networks, sometimes without any real purpose'); finally, they fell asleep to it.

Food preparation, including grocery shopping and different types of workout and recreation, which before the quarantine were practiced in a non-mediatised form, underwent a drastic change during the lockdown. However, as the diaries demonstrate, both practices had a mediating ritual role—establishing and maintaining contacts or, rather, doing something together online with those with whom we already have a relationship. Thus, Žana (21) was encouraged by her friends to take up workout with the Instagram trainer/ 'influencer' Pamela Reif: 'So, for instance, I did my workout at home watching a YouTube video of an Instagram influencer. I first came across this influencer in the "stories" of my friends, who also work out at home. Before that, I never used a home workout video'. Tina (21) spent a Saturday afternoon in her kitchen watching the video No bake Oreo cheesecake on The Cook 'n' Share YouTube channel on her cell phone and followed the instructions to make the desert. Immediately after that, she worked out in her room watching Pamela Reif's video on YouTube, using her smart Apple watch and a workout application. While doing her workout via YouTube, Ema (21) usually listened to podcasts; Nina (21) took an hour every day for a guided workout using a social network on her laptop, and Neli (25) did her guided yoga workout via YouTube before attending Zoom lectures.

During the quarantine, nearly everyone increased the use of technologies and media in food preparation. Irena (23), for example, baked potica, a Slovenian traditional nut roll, via a phone conversation with her grandmother, and Larisa (23) opened a link in FB Messenger that her mother had sent her and baked a sponge cake following a recipe from the cooking website Okusno.je. Before lunch, Pavla (21) always

searched for recipes on Google or Pinterest. All of these examples point to a specific communicative figuration in which nearly all diary keepers reported the same media technologies and contents as constantly used during the quarantine. These technologies also became an integral part of other daily social practices because they had become inaccessible in the physical world and were partially transferred to the digital world (workout, baking, etc.). Within the framework of their communicative formation, the students maintained and restored contacts with those who had formed part of their narrow personal circles (i.e. strong ties of closed networks) and continued to interact with those with whom they had already been involved in 'interaction ritual chains' via face-to-face communication. In contrast, the random and risky unpredictability of weak ties, alternative views and social capital derived from weak ties were left on the backburner. In his most recent interview, Rosa (2021), drawing on Collins (2004), observed that the quarantine period was marked precisely by the lack of irritating, unexpected as well as pleasant or unpleasant social interactions, which resulted in dissipated energy due to the weak density of social interactions. As Wajcman pointed out (2020, p. 20), the experience of lockdown has affected the sense of time, where the feeling of 'deceleration' has been one of the most common experiences and has contributed to additional digital practices.

Compared to the complete integration of technologies into the everyday routines of all diary keepers, moments of deliberate disconnectedness from technological connectivity were brief and inconsequential, and some diary keepers did not practice them at all. A few resorted to strategic non-use or, rather, the avoidance of technology and media. During the quarantine, Anamarija (24) took up gardening, which only partially allowed her to disconnect from her cell phone and laptop or, better, to successfully integrate the use of social networks into her new hobby. In contrast, Božidar (22) made sure to spend his spare time in nature away from technology: 'After a Zoom lecture, I go out for a breather, and I avoid using any technology'. The rare cases of disconnections and interruptions, instead of being strictly focused on the permanent connection, are those that, in fact, improve the understanding of what it means to live in the time of a complete naturalisation of everyday life being saturated with media flows (see Agai, 2022; Kaun & Schwarzenegger, 2014). Both Bucher (2020) and Kaun (2021) argued that disconnection[7] should not be approached (merely) in empirical terms and in terms of possibilities for disconnection. Bucher (2020, p. 615) contended that, with algorithms and machine learning, notions of voluntary and involuntary actions become blurred and that our ontological conditions already imply a techno-social co-existence. Consequently, there 'is nothing to disconnect from in the digital world' (ibid., p. 610). In contrast, Kaun (2021, p. 1580) saw digital disconnection as a form of negative bonds that are characteristic of the

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[7]   For a powerful argument on how digital disconnection in work contexts is simultaneously 'framed as a technology of *individual self-optimization* and an instrument of *collective self-care*' and how the ongoing platformisation of work that already incorporates disconnective technology turns workplaces into spaces of digital labour, see Fast (2021, pp. 1624–1625).

current mode of hyperconnected modernity. As distrust and partial non-use of social media disconnection reinforce this focus on individual choice to assert oneself in comparison to other individuals and social groups, and here, disconnection emerges not only as a coping strategy but also as a civic virtue (ibid.).

3.2. Online Lectures as Part of 'Media Repertoire': Attending with the Camera Turned off and Multitasking

During the quarantine, the diary keepers' daily lives were most strongly affected by the process of distance learning and the implementation of lectures through a designated platform, most often Zoom. Distance lectures are a reference point through which the communicative figuration is formed (see Couldry & Hepp, 2018). Although the students appeared to have made the lectures effortlessly part of their general media consumption and use of technology, most of them stressed about having problems with the attention deficit caused by this form of study process. They unanimously described feeling their attention drift due to the simultaneous use of other media and content. At 9:30 am, still in bed before the lectures started, Katja (22), along with her boyfriend, checked the news and her social networks (Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram). At 10 am, she listened to lectures via her computer, after which she made a phone call and a video call, texted, listened to music while making lunch and then watched the series Gossip Girl on Netflix for two hours, starting from 1 pm.

As is evident from their diaries and reflections, the students more often watched the Zoom lectures rather than actively participating in them, sometimes even off-camera and in pajamas ('… I also noticed that I often stayed in my PJs during the lectures themselves…', Gabriel, 22)—hence, much like they followed ordinary video and TV content. Stanislav (22) observed, 'I find such lectures much more comfortable, of course, because I can attend them from bed. This time, I followed from my kitchen, listening to the professor while having breakfast'. Despite feeling more comfortable, however, he also observed that 'my attention span is even shorter than when I had to attend lectures in person, in the lecture hall'. As their quarantine diaries demonstrate, the students embedded online lectures into the flow of the most ordinary tasks performed in a completely routinised way and with the minimum amount of attention. The difficulties in concentrating were also reported by other diary keepers, for example, Ivo (22), who was admittedly trying to 'get as much as I can [from lectures], which is not as simple as I've imagined because, at least in my case, being physically present in the lecture hall, "fires up" those brain cells that communicate to me that I am in an educational institution and that I need to focus on the lecture'. Larisa (22) reported on her problems stemming from the increasingly blurred distinction between the space-time of work and that of non-work and the related difficulty in multitasking.

The key consequences of permanent online connectedness are 'continuous partial attention' (Stone in Chayko, 2008) and fragmented attention because the diary keepers

were constantly 'on' and yet absent by following several different media simultaneously. The former physical and social differentiation of locales (home/faculty) and the ritual delineation (ordinary course of daily life/attending lectures) collapsed and, with them, the interactional distinctions between front stage and backstage (Goffman, 1959/2012) as well as between the discursive/interactional situation of entertainment and the intellectual discourse/educational interactional situation. In this regard, Hjorth and Richardson (2009) talked about highly fragmented and dispersed communication as a characteristic daily routine. One example of this is 'multitasking', that is, the simultaneous use of several media communication technologies and platforms on which people perform countless minor dispersed and mutually interrupting activities. A typical example of a media diary (Marijana, 23) pointing to the integration of lectures into overall daily media consumption is provided below.

Table 1: Example of Media Diary

08:30 am	*Laptop*	Zoom application, lecture Introduction to…	Home, at desk, alone
09:10 am	*Cell phone*	Break during lecture—checking Instagram, Facebook Messenger	Outside, alone, backyard
09:20 am	*Laptop*	Zoom application, lecture Introduction to…	Home, at desk, alone
09:50 am	*Laptop*	Break during lecture—YouTube, watching videos; Facebook, returning messages	Home, at desk, alone
10:00 am	*Laptop*	Zoom application, lecture Introduction to…	Home, at desk, alone
10:40 am	*Cell phone, laptop*	Break during lecture—checking Instagram, Facebook Messenger, TikTok + listening to background music on laptop	Home, during breakfast, alone
10:50 am	*Laptop*	Zoom application, lecture Introduction to…	Home, at desk, alone
12:00 am	*Laptop*	Facebook video call with family	Home, at desk, alone

Media technologies structured the students' attention in a way that most often allowed for no more than a superficial presence in lectures. During the quarantine, a specific mediatised figuration was formed, with its actors sharing their attendance in Zoom lectures, which had become completely integrated into their overall media consumption, making it no longer possible to draw a line in their daily lives between the closely interweaving practices of attending lectures, eating breakfast or surfing social media. The diminished ceremonial nature—e.g. going to the faculty, coupled with all the front-stage requisites (one's clothes and posture, the lecture hall, the physical presence of the lecturer and the fellow students)—and the resulting emotional energy suggest a reduction in Durkheim's social solidarity.[8] The absence of the ritual aspect of the 'lecture situation' leads to the degradation of relationships and the transformation of lectures into nothing more than utilitarian communication

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8   R. Collins (2004, p. 63) discusses this in the context of considering the consequences of abandoning courtesy conventions in electronic correspondence.

deprived of its ritual distinctiveness as an educational or intellectual practice by being integrated into a series of other media practices and, hence, commodified. The integration of lectures into overall media consumption is also an aspect of the dehierarchisation of cultural formats, which, according to Reckwitz, contributes to the dissolution of cultural universality typical of classic modernity, where cultural practices are linked to specific ritual contexts—cinema, concert hall, lecture hall—and to the generally applicable canon, now replaced by various forms of singularisation (see Reckwitz, 2020). In the digital world of extraordinary abundance, all cultural formats are equalised; for the diary keepers, Zoom lectures were thus part of the ecology of texts, images and voices competing for visibility in the continuous process of change and, as such, subject to the same mechanisms of attention and distractedness and the same regimes of evaluation as the rest of the digital culture.

4.   CONCLUSION

For the dominant sociality generated by social media and especially for our age group, a state of permanent connectedness and permanent anticipation is characteristic (see also Lupinacci, 2021). This encourages restlessness, instability and feelings of eventfulness and ephemerality. As Hand (2016) argued, even temporal moments that might have previously been considered 'empty' are now being routinely filled with repetitive acts of presencing, tacking and connecting. 'Taken together, they also point to the impossibility of "absence" or solitude in contemporary culture, a condition intimately related to the heightened "here and now" qualities of digital boredom' (Hand, 2016, p. 6). In this article, a group of students was defined as a 'figuration of individuals', with a shared affiliation serving as the basis for shared activities (i.e. practices). In other words, the study focused on a specific generational 'structure of feeling', which, according to Williams (1971/1961), signifies a common selection of naturalised perceptions and values, hence a kind of emotional structure through which a certain generation orients itself, living and producing it, and which finds its clearest articulation in cultural forms and conventions. According to the study, the media consumption diaries kept by young people, aged between 21 and 25 years, point to a technological/media transformation, a transformation of practices in everyday life and a radical mediatisation which plays an important role in the changing generational structure of feeling. The generation-specific relationship with technologies forms a generation-specific structure of feeling or specific subject cultures that develop as by-products of deep mediatisation, in which digital media, especially during quarantine, expanded into all spheres of their social life.

The diary keepers exhibited 'privatized mobility', as Spiegel modifies Williams' concept (in Morley, 2007, p. 200). Permanent media use further accentuated the fragmentation of attention, turning lectures into a media practice that, owing to its full integration into overall media practices, lost its ritual distinctiveness and locality outside commercial culture. In particular, various teaching genres—spanning

lectures, seminars and consultations—have a formal form where corporeality, symbolic access to authority and performative space play a vital role. Although lectures as a conventionalised formal event and genre form are criticised for representing a rigid space that freezes hierarchical relations and deprives students of the responsibility to respond, they also generate the feeling of collectivity among participants and include them in the 'dramatic performance' (see Thesen, 2007). Therefore, in the context of the micro-interactional approach, the situation of lectures represents a spatial concept.[9] The shift from the direct interaction of material bodies in physical space into a 'synthetic situation' also changes the definition of the situation. Lectures are part of the ecology of popular culture, into which the synthetic situation of Zoom lectures is integrated.

Amid this 'deep mediatisation' or, rather, the 'mediatisation of everything' (Livingstone, 2009), the diary keepers were so deeply caught up in media practices that their focus became increasingly scattered, which led to continuous fragmented, partial attention. In this context, a new social order has been emerging in which media materiality—that is, media as a technological artifact—appears ever more crucial. Contemporary media technologies force us to recognise that 'the materiality is no longer merely external environments for interaction, but are embedded into it' (Rasmussen, 1997, p. 12). The subject in communicative figurations is, therefore, constituted not merely within the framework of a certain symbolic and discursive order, but, historically, specific subject forms also develop against the backdrop of the world of artifacts of historically specific technological networks, which thus become tightly integrated into day-to-day practices as constitutive elements of sociality. Among the key questions for future research, a question of the formation of a specific subjective type in the context of the interrelation between digital and other everyday practices emerges. More importantly, it is not clear if this change relates to technological affordances and practices, connected with media ecology in its present commodified form, or if this change must be interpreted in the context of wider cultural change related to the hegemony of neoliberal culture.

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9   K. Knorr-Cetina (2009), indeed, questions this assumption in terms of shared temporality rather than spatiality, it is impossible to build on her position at this point.

is on contemporary material/consumer culture, media and popular culture   and the role of cultural practices in the construction of class distinctions.

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