The Medium in the Middle

Workplace from Meta, Enterprise Social Media, and The Intersection of the Personal and the Professional

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This thesis includes the five following texts in addition to an introductory framing text:


To Frej

You were absolutely no help at all,
and perhaps that was the best help of all.
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Framing Text
Epigraph

“Nothing can be further from the spirit of the new technology than ‘a place for everything and everything in its place.’ You can’t go home again.”

- **Marshall McLuhan**, *The Medium is the Massage*, p. 16

”What do we have that they should want?
We have a wall to work upon!
We have work and they have none
And our work is never done”

- **Anaïs Mitchell**, ”Why Do We Build the Wall”, *Hadestown*

“All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it”

- **Ecclesiastes 1:8**, New King James Version

”I’m trying to keep my private life out of it – and I think Workplace [from Meta] is somewhere in the middle. I do realize that it’s supposed to be “the social medium for colleagues”, but I just don’t need that in my everyday””

- **Interviewee** in organization using Workplace from Meta.
0.0) Overture

Me:” …so it’s like a version of Facebook, but only for you and your colleagues. Only the members of your organization can access, share, like, and do everything you do on the regular Facebook, but about work.”

Interlocutor: “Oh. That sounds … that sounds awful.”

(Personal communication)

Like most adults, I am often asked in social settings what I do for a living. This is perhaps one of the most common examples of how the personal and the professional intermingle in everyday life.

When asked to give some more details about my work (“I’m a researcher” – “Oh really? Researching what?”), I then attempt to explain Workplace from Meta, the enterprise social medium which is the empirical focus of my research. Often, I land on an explanation like the one recounted above. That specific exchange took place at an informal social gathering arranged by my interlocutor’s place of work. People were sipping cocktails and wine; a cooing toddler was being passed around a queue of eager hands. There was an even longer queue to add songs to the communal playlist filling the room (Could I make my escape before Wham! came on, I wondered?).

Despite the convivial atmosphere, I sensed that this was not the place to press my interlocutor on why they thought it would be “awful” to share a social medium with their colleagues. Mixed in with the conviviality described above, people were also discussing upcoming budgets and strategies, taking the opportunity to introduce themselves to otherwise distant superiors, or boasting proudly about recent professional achievements. Despite the cheery and informal veneer, we were not not within my interlocutor’s professional domain. We were not not at their workplace. I doubted I would get a frank answer with their colleagues within earshot.

Both my interlocutor’s reaction and my own hesitation lie at the heart of the tension which informs the pages of this dissertation. Social media have been discussed and researched in terms of their potential for facilitating self-expression, sociability and social organization and mobilization. However, what happens when social media are imported into a professional context, subsumed under the auspices of the workplace? Even within the domain of the personal, social media do not always sit easily with their users. Therefore, we should be curious about the tensions, hesitations, and appropriations that such media may provoke in working life. Working life is its own
context, just like social media are. On the face of it, importing social media into work is quite analogous to the holiday gathering I just described: Bringing a context which is usually associated with the personal (a party or a social medium) into the context of work. While the elements of the personal are present in both office parties and enterprise social media, the people navigating the situation must always do so with an awareness of how the situation shapes—and is shaped by—their relation to the context of work.

Studying this necessitates combining media studies with several other areas of study which have had a longer tradition of investigating working life. Accordingly, in the following pages I draw on concepts from the sociology of work, psychology, and political economy to provide a foundation for understanding exactly what happens when social media are formally integrated into the restricted context of work. I then explore this empirically via an interview-based study of 28 workers across a range of industries and organizations.

As a conclusion, I argue that enterprise social media in general, and Workplace from Meta in particular, invite us to reconsider our preconceived notions of what does and does not constitute "work" and "non-work", in other words "personal" versus "professional". Reconsidering these notions takes place at two levels: firstly, at the empirical level of individuals who are not sure what to make of this new medium, mainly because they associate such media with their personal context rather than their work context; secondly, it takes place at the theoretical and conceptual level. People typically find negotiating the boundaries between the personal and the professional to be something of a never-ending balancing act. Similarly, researchers should be aware of how contexts, individual preferences, and the characteristics of specific media contribute to determining what we can term "work" and "non-work". Drawing this distinction will be very likely a never-ending process. However, this does not mean that we cannot glean important insights from thinking with—and asking about—the intermingling of the personal and the professional, of work and non-work.

There is a wall to work upon, and the work is never done.
1.0.) Introduction

How do people interpret and use social media when they have to use them within the domain of work? This is the question posed by enterprise social media - social media made for use in the professional context of a workplace – and it is the driving research question of this dissertation. In this introductory chapter, I first give a brief introduction to the intersection of work and non-work, and the role social media in general are usually understood as playing in this regard, and how enterprise social media specifically complicate this intersection. This then leads into a discussion of the empirical focal point of this dissertation, the enterprise social medium Workplace from Meta. After a presentation of the medium itself, I proceed to outline how the medium is framed in promotional materials by its creators, Meta Platforms Inc. This then leads into an elaboration of the research question of this dissertation, an overview of the remaining chapters of the framing text (theoretical state of the art, methodology, discussion of results and conclusion), before I walk through the content and contributions of the five research articles which constitute the body of this dissertation.

1.1) Media and the Work/Non-Work Intersection

In the epigraph to this dissertation, I quoted the Canadian medium theorist Marshall McLuhan as saying that new technologies mean that we cannot “go home again” (1967, p. 16). While McLuhan is ostensibly talking about the march of technology inevitably reshaping the order of society, I am tempted to read him more literally. For the purposes of this dissertation, it would be more apt to say that new media mean that we can’t go home again without the domain of work coming with us. Work technologies are now present in the home and allow people to reshape their communicative habits (Stewart, 2003). Work “bleeds” into other domains of life, often facilitated by media which enable us to be “always on” (Baron, 2008; Gregg, 2011). Often these discussions focus on media in the form of devices, most recently portable computers, smartphones, and the mobile internet (Gregg, 2011; Mazmanian et al 2013; Stanko & Beckman, 2015). We cannot easily “go home again” without the media of work following us. This much is well established.

But can we go to work without the media of “the home” or the “personal” or “non-work” following us? Or without these media being absorbed by the context of work? And how do we react to this if they do? In this dissertation, I deviate from the usual focus on devices discussed above to
explore these questions, with a particular focus on social media. I explore social media as contexts – environments with their own conventions and expectations - interacting with the context of work. More concretely, I do this discussing the social media which are made with professional use in mind, the so-called “enterprise social media” (Leonardi et al., 2013).

Despite extensive studies into social media as such (Stoycheff et al., 2017; Lomborg, 2017), there is still a great deal of disagreement about their role in working life. Initial impressions seem to suggest the consensus that they belong entirely to the domain of the personal and have little to do with work. Histories of social media as we understand them today usually begin in the domain of the personal (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Leonardi et al 2013), as do pre-histories of social media (Driscoll, 2022; Pyne, 2021). Scholars investigating technology in working life are prone to categorizing social media usage as “hedonic” as opposed to “utilitarian” (Turel, 2015). Perhaps most significantly, users themselves categorize their social media usage as “personal, but not private” (Duguay, 2022; Lomborg, 2012). In the words of media scholar Jack Qiu (2018):

“[F]or average Internet users, the connections between social media and labor probably seem rather tenuous, if they appear to exist at all. Many would wonder, aren’t social media purely about entertainment and leisure activities? Aren’t we told that social media are all about fun and consumption and therefore act as a drain on productivity for employees, whose clicks and updates lead to endless procrastination? How on earth do they have anything to do with labor?”

(Qiu, 2018, p. 297)

To answer Qiu’s admittedly facetious rhetorical question, we can point to several scholars who assert that social media have at least something to do with work and labor, as he indeed does himself. We can point to scholars discussing social media as a venue for people to try and make a living by producing content (Glatt, 2022; Duffy, 2017). Scholars have also pointed out the massive amount of mostly unseen work going in to maintaining and supporting social media (Roberts, 2019). In more derisive tones, scholars have also discussed social media as a time-wasting intrusion into the domain of work (e.g., North, 2010; Turel, 2015), or as being fundamentally reliant upon a “confusion of work [relations] and friendship” (Gregg, 2011, p. 6). There are plenty of popular cautionary tales about people losing their jobs over a stray social media post (O’Connor & Schmidt, 2015; Ronson, 2015). Among the most critical voices, we also find those that argue that all social media are inherently reliant upon the unpaid exploitation of their users, either via data extraction,
uncompensated content production or both (Andrejevic, 2011; Baym, 2015; Terranova, 2000; Zuboff, 2019).

What these discussions usually have in common is an unspoken understanding that social media are - for most people - assumed to be outside the domain of work proper, even if these media rely upon these people’s uncompensated or aspirational labor (Duffy, 2017; Gandini, 2021). In contrast, my central concern in this dissertation is whether social media can become a central medium for communication within the domain of work, in a formal organization (e.g., Ellison, Gibbs, & Weber, 2015; Turco, 2016) and how this squares with the general understanding of social media as belonging to the domain of the personal, or non-work. In other words: When social media are imported into working life, how do people make sense of this and what are the implications for the boundaries between the personal and the professional?

In this dissertation, I explore the tensions at the intersection between work and non-work presented by enterprise social media, a subset of social media developed specifically for internal, professional usage by a wide range of workers and not just a narrow definition of media professionals (Leonardi et al., 2013). These media are meant for working life, but deliberately imitate the look and functionalities of “personal” social media. This makes them a critical area of study if we wish to understand the media-facilitated intersection between work and non-work. Enterprise social media seemingly provide an answer to the collapse of boundaries between work and non-work via (personal) social media by integrating these media into the context of the professional. However, the perceived attachment to the domain of the personal may in fact present a deeper problem for integrating such media into working life. This is what this dissertation will explore both empirically and theoretically.

In examining the intersection of work and non-work and the ensuing tension and interrelations between these domains, I am continuing a debate which has occupied scholars outside media studies for decades (Frederici, 2020; Hardt, 1999; Weeks, 2007). In sociology and psychology, this has been discussed in terms of a “boundary theory” which explores the relation between work and non-work and the ensuing “boundary work” required by individuals to integrate or separate these domains (Nippert-Eng, 1996). Central to this theoretical direction is the notion that these domains are mutually constitutive (Nippert-Eng, 1996; See also Hochschild, 1997). This mutual constitution of the “professional” and the “personal” has also been discussed by historians and economists who point out how the “personal” or the “home” often constitutes an unacknowledged but essential resource for professional life (Cowan, 1983; Frederici, 2020; Hardt, 1999; Weeks, 2007). This has in turn been most succinctly summarized as a “boundary struggle” over a separation of “economy” (work, the professional) from “society” (non-work, the personal) (Fraser, 2017).
While such discussions have not been blind to the role of technology as such (e.g., Cowan 1983), the role of media and communication at the intersection of work and non-work has received only limited attention. If we accept the assumption - prevalent in both media studies and recent studies into working life - that media are either a “condition” of everyday life (Andrijasevic et al., 2021), “containers of possibility that anchor our existence and make what we are doing possible” (Peters, 2015, p. 2) or otherwise a factor which should be considered on a par with the usual sociological concepts of structure and agency (Jensen, 2021, p. 17), then this is an obvious blind spot. More concretely, this is a blind spot which is important when it comes to social media, since these media are contexts in and of themselves, and thus also subject to constant negotiations of what does and does not belong (Duguay, 2020; Tiidenberg & van der Nagel, 2020). Therefore, it matters how these media intersect with the context of work and the boundaries of work as a domain.

Media, like all technology, are also sites of struggle (Beyes et al., 2022), not unlike how boundaries are themselves subjects of struggle (Fraser, 2017). The migration of “personal” media into the domain of the professional presents a fertile ground for such struggles to compound upon one another. We should therefore expect to see a wide variety of individual responses to the encounter with a “personal” medium migrating into the professional. It is individuals first and foremost who sculpt the boundary between their domains of the personal and the professional with and through the media in their lives. It is individuals who have a pre-conception of social media as being “personal” (Duguay, 2022; Lüders, 2009; Lomborg, 2012; Qiu, 2018), and it is individuals who must negotiate how an enterprise social medium traverses this boundary, or alternatively how it does not. To study this, my research in this dissertation centers on a “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2006) of an enterprise social medium: Workplace from Meta.

1.2) The Critical Case: Workplace from Meta

This dissertation is empirically centered around the enterprise social medium Workplace from Meta (née Workplace from Facebook). Workplace is a medium developed by Meta Platforms Inc (née Facebook, Inc.) and is perhaps best described as being a “professional” or “intra-organizational” version of Meta’s more popular platform, Facebook. Workplace thus belongs to the category of media often termed either “internal social media” (Madsen, 2017), “organizational social media” (Van Orsch & Coursaris, 2013) or in my preferred nomenclature, “enterprise social media” (Leonardi et al., 2013). This is a category of media designed for members of a single organization (a term which I will use as a synonym for lowercase-w workplace) to use. Enterprise social media in
general “mimic in look, feel, and functionality popular social networking sites such as Facebook” (Leonardi et al., 2013, p. 2). Meta evidently got tired of being mimicked, and released Workplace for commercial use in 2016, after having already used it as their own internal communications platform since at least 2011 (Workplace from Meta, 2019).

I approach Workplace from Meta as a **critical case** of a medium which may be understood as blurring the boundaries between work and non-work, and which may thus be interpreted with some ambiguity; in some cases, the medium has even attracted outright opposition. A **critical case** is here understood as a case which is “most likely” to be the site of some expected finding (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In contrast to comparable media such as the Microsoft-developed Yammer or the Salesforce-owned Slack, I view Workplace from Meta as being “most likely” to complicate the boundaries of work and non-work mainly because of the medium’s association with the domain of the personal via Meta Platforms Inc and Facebook.¹

Log on to your organization’s version of Workplace and you will encounter an interface which is virtually identical to so many other social media platforms. There will be a newsfeed showing an algorithmically curated selection of posts and interactions between your colleagues. As on personal social media sites, both you and your colleagues will be represented by profile pages showing a photograph of yourself and any other personal biographical information you may have chosen to enter. You yourself will be able to post updates in a combination of image, video, and text which your co-workers can comment upon. In the lower corner you will find a chat menu which will allow you to start a one-on-one or group conversation with any of your co-workers. In contrast to the personal Facebook medium, all organization members are mutually “connected” by default, so you can reach out to anyone you want to. Should a more persistent means of coordination and communication be required, you can open or create a “group” for you and any other members of the organization you might choose. And should you feel inclined to broadcast yourself to any of your co-workers who might care to watch, you can start a video livestream. Aside from the conspicuous lack of advertisements and games, I imagine that this sounds familiar to most readers.

Of all of Meta’s platforms, Workplace has attracted the least amount of attention from scholars and the public. In the feature-length video presentation launched when Facebook Inc rebranded to Meta and pivoted towards the metaverse as a space for socializing, playing, and working,

¹ Admittedly, Workplace from Meta also has several characteristics of an "extreme case" (Flyvbjerg, 2006), insofar as it is "atypical" and "dramatic" (p. 229) by virtue of having a direct counterpart in the form of Facebook, and by virtue of the medium's connection to the controversial company Meta Platforms Inc.
Workplace was barely even mentioned (Meta, 2021). Before the commencement of my own research, I could only locate a single scholarly text dealing with the medium in any depth (Schaefer, 2018). For comparison, Meta’s venture into the world of cryptocurrency has received much more in-depth attention from both scholars and journalists (Gerard, 2020; Swartz, 2020), and that project ended up amounting to nothing (Kharif & Bloomberg, 2022).

In contrast, Workplace is still an ongoing and supported project for Meta, even receiving the occasional shout-out from Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg himself. While exact numbers are hard to come by, at the time of writing Workplace could boast some seven million paid users worldwide (Zaveri, 2021). This figure is likely to be an underestimation as an unknown number of users in the NGO sector use the platform for free under the banner of “Workplace for Good”. According to recent anonymous accounts, Meta has received at least one offer to buy the platform, but they declined, allegedly because having this medium in their portfolio made Meta “look like an adult” (Lunden, 2022).

Workplace may be seen as Meta’s initial attempt to position themselves within the ongoing debates about the “future of work”. Such debates are often dominated by discussions of automation, artificial intelligence, job obsolescence, and the ensuing precarities and reconfigurations of the workforce (Moore, 2018; Marton & Ekbia, 2021). In contrast to these major shifts in work culture, Meta’s Workplace seems almost quaint. While there is some passing reference to automation and artificial intelligence, the overall focus in Meta’s promotional materials is clearly on optimizing human communication within existing organizations. There is little explicit talk of (self-)entrepreneurship, flexibility or similar individualizing discourses which often pervade descriptions of the current job market (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Fleming, 2015; Hardt & Negri, 2017; Harvey, 2005). Meta frequently mentions automation, but never as a wholesale solution to eliminate the workforce. Here, it seems to resonate with the organizational structure of social media firms (such as Meta themselves), which may tout a discourse of automation, yet not one of them “has succeeded in getting rid of its employees entirely [and] none has really attempted” (Qiu, 2018, p. 301). This is one of the senses in which Workplace from Meta is a medium in the middle. Workplace neither represents the invisible status quo of the perceived “gray media” usually associated with working life (Conrad, 2019), nor does it seem to be a harbinger of complete organizational rethinking. If anything, it is a measure involving piecemeal tinkering with organizational communication, a tinkering for the purpose of optimization.

Rather, the implicit assumption is that the communication on Workplace is intended to foster the internal community of a given organization, making it an organic and connected whole. This contrasts with other types of constellations of working life which are usually conceived of as being
brought about by a mix of precarization (Standing, 2011) and the emergence of new media (Scholz, 2017). Previously, it was usually the demands of working life which drove people to adopt new media and new communicative skills (Stewart, 2003). In contrast, Workplace implicitly links the requisite communicative skills to the ubiquity of Facebook, and to a lesser extent other social media, as a personal medium (Bucher, 2021; Schaefer, 2018).

This is significant when it comes to discussing how Meta wishes to frame Workplace. What are the prominent themes in Meta’s presentation of this medium and how do they relate to both Meta as a company and an assumed familiarity with Facebook as a medium? To answer this, I outline three overall themes of what Workplace from Meta is supposed to provide for the organizations employing it, at least according to Meta itself. These themes are based on video and text materials produced or endorsed by Meta and will serve as a background for the inquiries of the remainder of the dissertation.

1.3) The Medium According to Meta: How Workplace is Supposed to Work

In this section, I draw on an archive of publicly available materials about Workplace to answer the fundamental question of how the medium is framed. The purpose is not to present an exhaustive analysis of these materials, but rather to highlight some themes of how Workplace is presented by Meta, which the constituent research articles of this dissertation (articles I-V) do not deal with in detail, but which nonetheless contextualize their findings, as well as the research questions addressed in this dissertation. These materials were collected from posts from Workplace’s webpage, their YouTube channel, and Google Alerts on their product name in the period January 2019 to March 2022. Additionally, the official Twitter page for Workplace and for six of their most vocal and prominent employees were archived and manually mined for missing news items or other press coverage. In total, 305 texts (of about 1-2 standard pages in length) and 202 videos (ranging from less than a minute to just over an hour in length) were archived and examined.

If there is one striking overarching theme in what Workplace is supposed to provide, it is “connectivity”. Connectivity has been used as an analytical term in the study of new media (van Dijck, 2013; Leonardi & Treem, 2020), but is also very clearly an *emic* term which is frequently utilized by Meta employees themselves in framing the value of their personal social media platforms, especially Facebook (Haupt, 2021; Hoffmann et al., 2018). Thus, it is not particularly surprising that Meta relies upon this term in framing Workplace. As well as being in line with Meta’s established
goals, it also feeds into a more general understanding of “connectivity” as being desirable in organizational settings (Fast, 2021; see also Turco, 2016).

Workplace’s provision of connectivity is, I argue, divisible into three distinct themes in the press materials. These three themes are: (1) engagement, (2) community and (3) organizational privacy, and I will highlight how they are present(ed) in Meta’s own materials and show how they serve to invite further questions about Workplace. These aspects in turn inform the empirical articles referred to in this dissertation, as will become apparent in the later discussion on my research questions.

The first aspect is “engagement”. Not only does Workplace allegedly afford connectivity, but according to Meta, employees take the opportunity to engage with the medium, contributing to it and interacting with it. The second aspect is “community”. Just like the personal social media it imitates; Workplace is said to have its “connectivity” cohere into a community under the auspices of the organization. Finally, the third aspect is what I call “organizational privacy”, which is the least explicitly described aspect. Here I argue how Meta imply that their enterprise social medium counters the major detraction of social media usage in the workplace: namely that such usage is ultimately either unproductive work, unpaid labor for the owners of the social media, or both.

**Theme #1: Engagement**

Even if a potential user of Workplace “for some reason” is not among the billions of people using Facebook every day, Meta still assures us that “we see that [Workplace] is so intuitive to use, there’s no need for manuals”. (Workplace from Meta, 2017). These quotes emphasize engagement – i.e. that employees actually use the platform. This is often linked, implicitly and explicitly to the wide adoption of Facebook as a social medium (Bucher, 2021). At the same time as this comparison to Facebook, Meta is contrasting Workplace with many of the digital media associated with professional life. This includes both the intranets and or what might be termed “gray media” (Conrad, 2019). “Don’t e-mail me, I’m only on Workplace” is a highlighted quote from the CEO of a New Zealand food retail chain, topping off a promotional story about how the company management reduced the volume of e-mails to a tenth of pre-Workplace levels. “Information that used to be sent through newsletters, notice boards and the intranet is now posted in specific groups on [Workplace]” goes another story. As well as seeking to rein in the use of “gray media” such as e-mail and intranets, Workplace is also sold on the promise of being able to reduce the usage of “Shadow IT”, or unauthorized communications solutions which are nonetheless adopted by employees because of being easy to use over the sanctioned media. In one instance, the “Shadow
IT” in question happened to be unauthorized usage of WhatsApp, another medium owned by Meta, which was later officially integrated with Workplace by Meta themselves (Gleason, 2022). The theme of engagement even represents a victory over other Meta’s other products, it would seem.

**Theme #2 Community**

Another spokesperson from a charity organization states how they hope Workplace would be a technology which “makes people come together, and [which then] ultimately disappears” (Workplace from Meta, 2018). In the same speech, the spokesperson mentions how viral connective actions (Bennet & Segerberg, 2012) such as the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge were an aspirational goal for how they aimed to use Workplace for their internal communication needs. With such aspirations, we see the idea of “connectivity” cohere into not just a series of connections, but into a community with shared goals and visions, as is discussed in, for instance, a study of computer-supported cooperative work (CSCW) (Ackerman, Dachtera, Pipek & Wulf, 2013). However, I would argue that the idea of community via communication presented in Meta’s materials goes further still. The proposed idea of community also acknowledges and relies upon what information systems (IS) scholars might call the “hedonic” functions of social media communication, and thus exhibits a view of social media usage which is congruent with a habitual or ritual view of communication (Carey, 2007; Chun, 2017), or of communication as a constituent part of an organization (Coreen & Seidl, 2022). This quote from a panel discussion with Meta’s then COO Sheryl Sandberg illustrates this nicely:

**Sandberg:** By the numbers we now have more than 30,000 Facebook [Meta Platforms Inc] employees. 95% log in to Workplace at least daily. 250 messages are sent per sender per week … [grimace, aside to audience] that’s a lot…”

(Audience laughter)

**Sandberg:** (sardonically) I hope they’re all really productive and important.

(Audience laughter)

(Workplace from Meta, 2019)
This exchange – resonating with laughter as it does – acknowledges the general “hedonic” or “timewasting” perception of ordinary Facebook or social media usage. However, the laughter also hints at a shared understanding that such ostensibly “timewasting” behavior is acceptable as long as is done “within” the bounds of the organization. This amounts to an implicit acknowledgement that the organization is also built upon such rituals of phatic communication, even if they do provide any immediately obvious value. In other words, what would otherwise count as “non-productive” or “slacking” usage of social media is now subsumed under the domain of work, insofar as it takes place on Workplace. This leads into the final theme I wish to highlight: Organizational privacy.

**Theme #3 Organizational Privacy**

Browse any of Meta’s announcements relating to a new organization becoming a Workplace customer, and you are likely to find at least one comment cheekily pointing out that a new horde of employees’ personal data are now in Meta’s clutches. This shows the pervasiveness of the understanding that social media in general - and Meta’s products in particular - are based on business models of user data extraction. Although studies taking a critical approach to the business models adopted by social media have a long history (Andrejevic, 2011; Terranova, 2000; Fuchs, 2014), public critique of social media in general, including their business models and the lack of accountability of their developers, appears to have increased in recent years (Helles & Lomborg, forthcoming). I speculate that this is most likely due to both a popular backlash embedded in broader cultural trends (Portwood-Stacer, 2013; Moe & Madsen, 2021) and an increasing amount of scholarly critique (most notably Zuboff, 2019). Meta rarely responds directly to such adverse comments, but sporadically their promotional materials will underline how an organization purchasing their products remains in complete control of the data flows from their particular Workplace instance. This is usually done with reference to ISO certifications to lend legitimacy to these claims. In other words, the organizations are the ostensible owners of everything which goes on in “their” Workplace. One typical example goes as follows:

“Very important point: Of course [Workplace] is very secure, so the company owns all of [sic] the data, all of the knowledge that’s being created and shared within the business. And we [Meta] ultimately just act as data processors. So, you get to retain all of your knowledge, apply in a security [sic] information that you may need.”

(Workplace from Meta, 2017).
Ostensibly, then, organizations do not have to worry about being “spied upon” —I will return to this in the constituent articles - although individual employees might not feel quite so sure.

**Complications of Connectivity**

These ideas of engagement, community and organizational privacy throw up several interrelated complications. Firstly, engagement with a medium like Workplace invites workers to consider how they wish to *present themselves* to fit into their community and maintain the contextual integrity of work. What exactly counts as appropriate communication on a medium like Workplace? Secondly, how durable is a community that is reliant upon a medium like Workplace, and how long will Workplace be the primary venue for such a community, which in the end does not owe its existence to this medium? Thirdly, how might all these aspects of self-presentation and community-building be complicated by the fact that a person using Workplace not only self-presents to their community, both unknown and known, but may suspect that they are also communicating to an unseen third party via their data traces. All these issues inform the research questions and the structure of the present dissertation.

1.5) **Research Questions and Structure of the Dissertation**

The overall research question of this dissertation is as follows:

- How do the uses and interpretations of enterprise social media complicate the boundary between the personal and the professional, or work and non-work?
  - How does Workplace from Meta complicate the boundary between the personal and the professional as a result of employees’ *interpretation* of this medium as
    - a social medium in general, and
    - a product of Meta Platforms Inc in particular.

I attempt to answer this question through both a theoretical discussion (of “work” and “social media”) as well as an empirical research design and series of analyses which are sensitive to people’s experiences and interpretations of Workplace from Meta, and how this medium complicates the boundary between the personal and the professional and between work and non-work.
In the second chapter of this framing text, I will present an overview of how I operationalize the concepts of “Work” and “(Social) Media” for the purposes of this dissertation. As previously alluded to, this will require the bridging of theoretical understandings and preconceptions of media studies and several other disciplines which have a longer tradition of investigating working life. By outlining the current state of the research, I highlight how studies of working life have paid limited attention to media and how media studies conversely have paid little attention to working life. As I argue, enterprise social media in general - and Workplace from Meta in particular - are ideally posed to fill this gap.

This leads me to the third chapter of the framing text, which is a presentation of the research methodology applied in producing the empirical parts of the dissertation. This section will describe rationales for sampling, data collection and analysis used for the overall project and how they informed the research questions and strategies adopted to analyze each of the constituent articles.

In the following chapter, I move on a discussion which synthesizes the contributions of the individual articles and suggest future directions for the study of media in working life. I summarize my findings about the general relationship between social media and work before moving on to a discuss my findings about Workplace from Meta in particular. Here I return to the three themes of engagement, community, and organizational privacy, and outline how these themes are complicated in the actual reception of the medium of Workplace by end users. Following this, I argue for a more extensive consideration of working life within media studies, based on the findings of this dissertation, before suggesting some potential avenues for further research. Finally, the last chapter in this framing text outlines the central conclusions and contributions of the dissertation as a whole.

Following this, I enclose the five constituent research articles used in this dissertation. As I have presented them here, they are all either reformatted versions of the published versions of the text or (in case final publication is pending) the latest submitted versions.
### Constituent articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Summary of Contributions</th>
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*Table 1.a – list of constituent articles and contributions*
Research Reviews: Articles I and II

Articles I and II present the primary theoretical and literature review parts of this dissertation. In Article I, I present an analysis of the many ways in which social media have been constituted as overlapping with working life in the existing research literature. To varying degrees, these different intersections are important in the following research articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Intersection Name</th>
<th>Exemplification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social Media before work</td>
<td>“Cybervetting” and individual familiarity with the conventions of social media usage even before entering the formal workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Media instead of</td>
<td>Personal social media usage during the temporal and/or spatial bounds of paid work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work</td>
<td>work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Media about Work</td>
<td>Communicating about the content or institution of work via social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social Media for work</td>
<td>Using the affordances of social media to improve one’s working conditions, but without this usage being a requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social Media as work</td>
<td>The usage of social media (i.e. interacting with specific social media platforms) is a required work task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Social Media under work</td>
<td>Social media act as the infrastructure of the organization of working life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Work for Social Media</td>
<td>All interactions with social media ultimately produce value for the platform owners, whether the user is paid or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Social Media after Work</td>
<td>Social media facilitating contact with the domain of work, even when a person has left the workforce.</td>
</tr>
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Table 1.b – List of the eight intersections of work and social media

Article I shapes a broad foundation for the discussions in the empirical articles. What happens when an enterprise social medium is positioned as a social medium under work (Sixth intersection) within the coercive context of work (Andersson 2017; Lupton, 2016). As will become
apparent, this underlying of a social medium requires individual familiarity with the other intersections as well. Thus, a medium like Workplace requires that users are familiar with social media before entering the organization (First intersection), that they are willing to check Workplace along with or instead of other media (Second intersection), that they are interested in phatically and ritually communicating about their work via Workplace or even use it to do their work tasks (Third and Fourth intersections). It further requires that employees make up their own minds about whether interacting with Workplace is their job (Fifth intersection), and to what extent they think it matters whether think so or not, because their very actions create new data traces about their professional selves anyway (Seventh intersection).

In Article II, I proceed to a review of recent studies into so-called “digital disconnection”, in other words, the most recent manifestation of media resistance (Syvertsen, 2017; 2020; Portwood-Stacer, 2013; Fast, 2021). This article draws its conclusions from an analysis of 346 peer reviewed empirical research texts on the phenomenon of digital disconnection. By “digital disconnection” I mean the deliberate or consensual restriction or refusal of media usage. As the sample of that article shows, this is mainly framed as showing resistance towards social media. Significantly, the phenomenon of digital disconnection does not seem to have made its way into the context of work. Therefore, studies of resistance, non-adoption or non-use of enterprise social media tend to frame this phenomenon as a hindrance to be overcome (Buettner, 2015; Giermindl et al., 2017; Madsen & Verhoeven, 2016). This contrasts with what I argue in the article to be the ethos of digital disconnection research, in which such non-use is explored for its meaningfulness to the people involved (Bucher 2020).

Together, these two review articles establish two related points for the purposes of this dissertation: Firstly, that social media, while they may primarily be perceived as a personal rather than professional category of media, are nevertheless closely intertwined with the domain of work. Secondly, while there is plenty of research about resistance to personal social media, we know little or nothing about how their professional counterparts (enterprise social media) may be resisted in professional contexts.

**Empirical Contributions: Articles III-V**

As will become apparent across all three of these articles, the idea of media-facilitated “connectivity” in the workplace is complicated by people’s desire to maintain a boundary between their professional and personal lives. One of my interviewees summarizes it succinctly:
“‘Connecting’ closer with my colleagues in not something which I seek out on a daily basis […] I try to keep my private life out of it – and I think Workplace is somewhere in the middle. I do realize that it’s supposed to be “the social medium for colleagues”, but I just don’t need that in my everyday work”.

(Interviewee, spring 2019)

Here, the very name Workplace from Meta also seems to work against an engagement with the platform. “They [Meta] would have much easier time of it [selling Workplace], if it didn’t say Facebook everywhere”, as one interviewee remarked to me back when the medium was still called Workplace from Facebook. This association with “Facebook” complicates people’s perceptions of Workplace in two ways: firstly, in the sense that it creates associations with the (frivolous, personal, “hedonic”) content of the Facebook medium, but also in the sense that it draws attention to the relationship between Workplace and Meta as a company. The connection between Workplace as a medium and Meta as a company complicates the notions of organizational privacy. My interviewees are to a degree all aware of the data extraction practices of Meta as a company, although they don’t all necessarily condemn these practices. However, it does muddy the waters to a degree about who exactly owns or benefits from all the activity (and resulting data extraction) on Workplace.

In Article III, I take as a point of departure insights into transmedia theory, where certain scholars have recently drawn our attention to the media-centric nature of professional life (Fast & Jansson, 2019). In this article, I present three examples of how to solve the conundrum of how to understand Workplace in the broader everyday category of “social media” from the perspective of the individual worker. I examine how the logic of how to use Workplace may be guided by orienting oneself towards a heuristic of the self, the system or the social world. This heuristic is inspired by Lomborg & Frandsen (2016). The self-inspired approach focuses on Workplace’s functionality in both keeping track of (self-communicating) one’s professional achievements and broadcasting them. The social-world-centered approach is sensitized to the workplace as a communicative setting. Here, the emphasis is on not violating social codes among colleagues, while still retaining the ability to participate in phatic communication. Finally, the system-centered approach explicates the familiarity with the regular Facebook platform as a means of communication. Here, I present the clearest example of the social nature of Facebook being migrated into the domain of work with Workplace, as I present a case of a small organization using Workplace almost exclusively for informal, social communication. The overall contribution of Article III is thus to illustrate how there is great variance in the interpretation of what kind of medium Workplace is. It is a medium in caught in a struggle between different understandings of social media, somewhere between the personal and the
professional, with the associations with the personal often winning out. This is one of the ways in which it is a medium in the middle. We may have the engagement which Meta boasts Workplace provides, but there is a great deal of negotiation going on about what kind of communication this engagement is to consist of, and whether it is appropriate for a professional setting. This is a negotiation which will also be touched upon the two remaining empirical articles.

In Article IV, co-authored with Stine Lomborg, I turn to the question of what role Workplace plays when the lowercase-w workplace disappears. Analyzing the interviews conducted during the first peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we examine which role Workplace is understood to play during the, at the time, extraordinary circumstances brought about by the lockdown. Here, the evidence suggests that the phatic communicative affordances of Workplace were secondary to more “live” forms of communication. Additionally, the COVID-19 lockdowns represented a clear example of work migrating into the domain of the personal, potentially eroding temporal, spatial and social boundaries along the way. Under these circumstances, not only was Workplace a medium which had “migrated” from the personal into professional life, professional life had now plunked itself unavoidably into the personal. In addition to providing more examples of the negotiations about what kind of communication Workplace is supposed to promote, this article also illustrates the difficulty of relying on this medium for community at work, especially under circumstances where working life became particularly reliant upon digital media.

Article V returns to the question of the relationship between Workplace from Meta, the techlash and the implications that enterprise social media have for privacy and autonomy, especially in the context of surveillance capitalism – a term which has become inextricably linked with social media. In this article, I find no real evidence that the coerced usage of Workplace from Meta causes much concern about possible datafication or exploitation by Meta. Rather, concerns about confidential data or work patterns are “outsourced” to the organization my interviewees work for. However, there still exists a potential danger that Workplace might be used for purposes of surveillance by colleagues and management. I propose an explanation of the lack of resistance which draws upon the idea of “organizational digital resignation”; where “ordinary” digital resignation is “corporately cultivated”, I argue that it can also be “organizationally cultivated”. After all, organizational membership usually entails some division of labor, and in a similar perhaps also a “division of concerns”. Are Meta spying on us through our work apps? “Who knows, and anyway, that’s not my department” is the answer I seem to get. The article thus illustrates that the organizational privacy touted by Workplace may not be obvious to employees.
02) Theory, Background, and State of the Art

In this chapter, I will outline the existing research investigating the two areas of social media and work. Surprisingly, there has not been much significant overlap between the two, and I will highlight why I believe this to be a gap in need of bridging. Although I highlight this research gap between the two areas of study, my errand is not mere “gap-spotting” (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011); rather, I intend to outline how social media and work are generally perceived by both researchers and the public as belonging to the domains of the personal and the professional respectively, and explain how this in turn is a form of implicit boundary work (Nippert-Eng, 1996) which reproduces a sharp divide between these two domains of life. Hence, my aim is to problematize this assumed division between the personal and the professional as it appears in the current research. By problematize, I mean identifying the unspoken assumptions that these two objects rightly belong in two discrete and separate research fields, outlining each one and proposing an alternative assumption (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). In presenting this alternative assumption, I argue that such a sharp division leaves us particularly disadvantaged in studying enterprise social media (and specifically Workplace from Meta) as something which may have a relation to both the domain of the personal and the professional.

This chapter is divided into five major sections. In the first section, I outline what exactly I mean by “social media” and “work” for the purposes of this dissertation. This will also lead into a discussion of the mutual relevance of studying media and studying working life. In the second section, I outline how social media and work are both seen as something akin to preconditions of contemporary life. In the third section, I argue how both social media and work are contexts which may both be both coercive and venues for self-expression and self-fulfillment. The fourth section outlines the mutual disinterest between social media studies and studies of working life. Finally, the fifth section argues for why these two areas should be seen in relation to each other.
2.1 Terms: (Social) Media and Work

**Media and Social Media as Terms**

For the purposes of this dissertation, I understand media as anything that enables and expands the possibility for communication either interpersonally or intra-personally (Jensen & Helles, 2011; Lomborg & Frandsen, 2016). Everyday examples of media thus include those which afford and instantiate communication on either a many-to-many (e.g., social media, information systems), one to many (e.g., broadcast radio, television), one-to-one (e.g., instant messaging, telephone conversations) or self-to-self (e.g., self-tracking applications) basis. This broad understanding of media will mostly come into play in Article II, in which I review general trends in resistance towards media. For the remainder of this dissertation, my empirical focus will be on social media in general, and enterprise social media in particular.

As I delineate in Article I of this dissertation, I use the term social media in a “colloquial (but still academically acceptable)” sense (Bagger, 2021, p. 2029). Here, I mostly apply it to media which is reliant upon user-generated content (Bechman & Lomborg, 2013) and which facilitate many-to-many communication (Jensen & Helles, 2017). To a lesser extent, I also understand social media to be a part of the “real-name web” (Hogan, 2013), or at least not immediately bound up in pseudonymity or anonymity (although see van der Nagel, 2017). Additionally, I consider social media as often being tied up with business models which are reliant upon the extraction of user data (Baym, 2015; Zuboff, 2019).

In line with recent scholarship from management and organization studies (Andrijasevic et al., 2018; Beyes et al., 2022; Plesner & Husted, 2020), I regard media as an inescapable part of working life. To borrow a phrase from Andrijasevic and colleagues (2021), media are a “condition” (p. xi) of everyday life in general and working life in particular. Here, I mean “condition” both in the sense of prerequisite and in the sense of circumstance. If work is almost unavoidable for individuals, then media are perhaps even more unavoidable for professional organizations (prerequisites). Given that they are so unavoidable, media used at work can thus not help influencing the rhythms, patterns, and boundaries of work (circumstance).
Work as a Term

Work is the central context of my present research. For the purposes of this dissertation, I understand work to be a domain of life which stands in opposition to some type of non-work. The received notion of work is thus the domain of activities where people understand themselves to be “mak[ing] a living” (Watson, 2017, p 5). I use “work” as opposed to “labor” as my central term for several reasons, some of which I touch upon in Article I of this dissertation. For now, I wish to underline that while I find labor to be an adequate description for an activity (such as working), I find it to be an inadequate description of a domain of life. In turn, work as a domain of life can only really be understood when contrasted with some other domain. As Nippert-Eng (1996) astutely puts it “home’ [or non-work] and ‘work’ are inextricably, conceptually defined with and by each other” (p. 4).

The list of what exactly “work” is contrasted with is of course long (Beigi et al., 2018). Many of the scholars I draw from contrast work with concepts such as “the home” (Nippert-Eng, 1996) or “the family” (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Beckmann, Mazmanian & Harmon, 2015). However, relying on concepts such as “family” or “the home” are problematic as analytical heuristics when the research subjects are for instance childfree, or when “the home” needs to be fully reconsidered during a global pandemic lockdown (see Article IV in particular). This is to say nothing of the ethical problems with assuming and reproducing the idea that it is families which structure non-working life, and hence the source of any problems in that domain (Utoft, 2020). In contrast, I rely on a dichotomy between “work” and “non-work” and between “the professional” and the “the personal”.

Keeping the domain of work separate from or integrated into other aspects of life requires what Nippert-Eng (1996) and other scholars of boundary theory term “boundary work”.

2 Notably, the term “boundary work” has perhaps more famously been applied within the discipline of science studies, where it relates to the “demarcation problem” between science and non-science (Gieryn, 1983). While there are obvious shared affinities between Gieryn and Nippert-Eng’s usages of the term, I adopt Nippert-Eng’s usage in the present dissertation.
central metaphor she relies upon is “sculpting”, a process in which “matter is envisioned, divided up, and related to itself with virtually endless possibilities” (p. 10). As such we “produce and find ourselves restrained by systems of classification” (1996; p. xi), as she puts it.

Accordingly, I do not assume any a priori universal boundaries and intersections between work and non-work. The segmentation or integration of work and personal life may thus look very different depending on whether we are talking about, for example, military personnel living in provided quarters (Beckmann & Stanko, 2020), or a high-prestige tech worker being provided laundry services, lunches, and leisure amenities by their organization (Chen, 2022). It will also look different for a precariously employed academic (Fleming 2021), an ostensibly unemployed spouse still expected to ‘perform’ at their partner’s high-prestige job (Hochschild, 1969), or a gig worker in a digitally facilitated economy (Scholz, 2017). Aside from one’s job category, this boundary between work and non-work will also be influenced by matters of gender (Bailyn, 1994; Kanter, 1977), social class (Gregg, 2011, p. 136), and family status (Akers, 2004; Utoft 2020). It may also vary between different people within these groups and at different times across their life courses (Clarke, Sanders, Haynes & Vande Griek 2019). Finally, if it was not clear already, the last few years have certainly drawn attention to the fact that pressing societal circumstances (such as a global pandemic) may play a role in how work and non-work mutually shape one another (Utoft, 2020; Cappelli, 2021).

The received notion of work as the place where one makes a living (cf. Watson 2017) of course presents something of a problem. Not everything which takes place at work might seem particularly work-related or productive (Paulsen, 2014; Graeber, 2018). Additionally, there are many aspects of life outside of formal work which are essential for making a living, but which are usually not counted as paid work. Notable examples include the emphasis on material and affective labor that reproduces the workforce, a viewpoint which has been put forward by several Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial scholars (Frederici, 2020; Hardt, 1999; Kanter, 1977; Orgad, 2019; Marcal 2016; Mies, 2014; Weeks, 2007). To take a prominent example, the philosopher and critical theorist Nancy Fraser classifies the attempts at sharply dividing the economic (masculine, productive, work) from the social (feminine, reproductive, care) as “boundary struggles” (Fraser, 2017, p. 25). Although Fraser makes no mention of Nippert-Eng or other boundary theorists, she clearly touches upon some of the same issues. For my present purposes, the relevant takeaway from Fraser is that any division of work from other aspects of life is a socially constructed distinction which does not fully consider the totality of economic flows. However, this distinction is nonetheless real, insofar as it still shapes people’s interpretation of what does and does not belong in the domain of work.

This then is relevant when discussing social media and work, and how social media is generally perceived as belonging to another domain of life than work (Qiu, 2018).
understanding of social media as being exclusively personal may be critiqued with reference to the business models of social media (e.g. Baym, 2015; Zuboff, 2019) or with reference to specific professions facilitated by social media (e.g. Duffy, 2017; Glatt, 2022). However, a more wide-reaching critique of this separation needs to take a broader view of social media’s relation to the domain of work in general, and how these two phenomena (social media and work) are almost inevitable features of everyday life. This is the purpose of the next section.

2.2. Work and Social Media as Preconditions

In this section, I will explain social media and work as important factors in everyday life, serving as something akin to preconditions for societal participation.

Work as a Pre-condition

An exhaustive list of the factors and forces which make work a pre-condition of life is beyond both the scope and aim of this text. Accordingly, I will merely highlight a selection of economic, cultural, and social factors that intertwine to make work not just a condition of living, but also something akin to a precondition.

Starting with economic factors, paid work is still the dominant precondition for making a living under our current economic system. Most succinctly, recent scholarship revisiting Marxist ideas argues how economic compulsion explains “why workers show up at the factory gates in the first place” (Mau, 2019, p. 71). Recent popular economic scholarship has also described the current unusual situation where the richest members of society now make their living through not just ownership of capital (though that is still the main contributor), but also through work (Piketty, 2014; Milanovic, 2019). Cultural forces also play a part in celebrating the inevitability and aspirational nature of work. Here, media studies offer up plenty of insights about the representation of work. For instance, Lynn Spigel (2005) describes a shift from “conspicuous consumption” to “conspicuous production”, in which employees signal their social worth by working - and being seen to be working - all the time (p. 415). Studies in critical management have described how work as a concept has “retained a sense of preordained immanence” (Fleming 2015, p. 1). Returning to the received idea of work as “making a living”, Fleming notes: “questioning the idea of work is a little like questioning ‘life itself’” (p. 2). This cultural instantiation of the celebration (and inescapability) of work is complementary to broader social factors. Here, not being a part of the realm of work is
usually treated with suspicion, or as “abnormal” (Baumann, 2005, p. 5). Being without work is seen as something akin to a sickness, for which the only cure is work (see Frayne ed., 2019).

I hope to have illustrated that work is a context which for most people is unavoidable, or at the very least that abstention from work can have grievous consequences. This first and foremost provides us with reason to study work as a central context of life.

**Social Media as a Pre-condition**

As with participation in the context of work, I will also make the case that participation in social media is the result of several interrelated factors, including economic, cultural, and social factors. Again, my aim is not to provide an exhaustive list, but merely to provide enough evidence to make this argument clear.

As we are talking about social media, there is a case for starting with social factors. Here, one compelling argument lies in the network effects which are allegedly provided by social media. Losing out on social connections — or at least the ambient awareness of one’s networks offered by these media - is thus a major deterrent from deleting one’s account or never signing up in the first place (Karppi, 2018). As many scholars have noted, social media are part of a broader culture of connectivity (e.g., van Dijck, 2013). This means that connective media have become a habitual part of everyday life that are now almost taken for granted (Chun, 2017). It also means that connective media are perceived as indispensable in (and not just for) the general societal discourse (Fast, 2017).

An online presence, if not specific social media accounts, is a tacitly required part of job seeking, and thus of economic participation in the narrow sense (Melton, Miller, Jensen, & Shah, 2018). Finally, scholars have focused on the fact that media participation across many domains of life is increasingly coerced (Barassi, 2019, p. 415). The professional domain is an obvious instantiation of this coercion, as I have discussed in this section.

As I elaborate on in more detail in Article II of this dissertation when discussing the research on digital disconnection, we can of course find plenty of examples of resistance, hesitance, or criticism of social media. However, as I describe later, this resistance is mostly partial or temporary. It seems that escaping social media, and Facebook in particular, is not so easily done (Bucher, 2021; Karppi, 2018). The importance of this is due to both the pedigree of enterprise social media (see Article II) and the fact that Facebook was used as a point of comparison for enterprise social media (see Articles I and III in particular), long before Workplace from Meta appeared on the scene.
2.3 Work and Social Media as Contexts

**Social Media and Work as coercive contexts**

Social media are contexts which impose many restrictions on their users. These restrictions are in part due to moderation by the sites’ owners and because of the technical affordances of the given media (Bogost & Montfort, 2007; Gillespie, 2010). However, they are also the result of how people have negotiated the appropriate communication on these media (Lomborg, 2013; Tiidenberg & van der Nagel, 2020). This is what will occasion users to tell each another “you can’t use this app for that” (Duguay, 2020).

Ontologically, work is a coercive context, insofar as choice and freedom are restricted within it. This point has perhaps been most forcefully argued in recent years by the American scholar Elizabeth Anderson (2017), who in effect argues that most workplaces are under the control of authoritarian governments in the form of management and ownership who rule over employees in a form of dictatorship. Although Anderson’s focus does not encompass all types of professional organization (see Ellerman, 2018), I judge it to be an accurate description of an aspect of working life that is often overlooked. Significantly, Anderson does not take this to exclude the idea that work may be meaningful or satisfying (more on which below).

The coercive nature of work itself as a context is relevant for several reasons, most of which are outside the scope of this dissertation. Most pertinently for my present purposes, is the fact that this coercive nature extends to the usage of media within the workplace (Lupton 2016; Moore, 2018). The choice of whether an enterprise social medium is used within an organization does not lie with any given individual employee.

**Social Media and Work as sources of comfort and meaning**

Crucially, work and social media cannot be understood as contexts that are exclusively negative. Both social media and work may also be sources of comfort, belonging and self-expression. Work can also be a domain where someone feels immense freedom. “Work can be a real escape” as one of Hochschild’s interviewees puts it (1997, p. 223). As one recent review article puts it, “[d]eriving meaning from work is neither new nor bad” (Alliger, 2019). Among other things, people may find fulfillment, self-expression, validation, or a sense of belonging at work (Hochschild, 1997; Gregg,
That work often fails to live up to this potential is at the heart of much of the recent scholarship criticizing work as an institution (e.g., Fleming, 2015, 2021; Graeber, 2018; Paulsen, 2014; Normark & Jensen, 2021). As noted by many of these scholars the alleged emptiness of work is often compensated for by social media use (Graeber 2018: p. 137; Paulsen, 2014: p. 86; Normark & Jensen 2021, p. 41). This is what I call “social media instead of work” in Article I of this dissertation, and which corroborates my point that social media usage is generally viewed as an intrusion of the personal into the professional.

Using social media, then, can feel like an escape from work. Even before we discuss enterprise social media, it is worth noting that social media are thus framed as a way of bringing the personal into the professional, a consensus shared by scholars and the public. This is evident in at least three ways. Firstly, scholars interested in the histories of both personal and professional social media tend to start their historical overviews with social media belonging to the domain of the personal (boyd, 2007; Leonardi et al. 2013). Even the prehistories of social media tend to privilege and emphasize the personal (e.g., Driscoll, 2022; Pyne, 2021). Secondly, the dichotomy between hedonic and utilitarian media usage prevalent within the study of information systems also reifies social media as belonging to the former (Turel, 2015). Thirdly, empirical studies of ordinary social media usage corroborate the notion that users themselves primarily see their social media usage as personal (Lomborg, 2012; Duguay, 2022).

2.4) Partial Conclusion: The Relationship Between Social Media and Work

In summary, I have used this chapter thus far to show how social media and work are two almost inescapable contexts (although admittedly with work being the more inescapable of the two). This inescapability is due du a variety of cultural, economic, and social forces at play. Additionally, social media While social media and work have generally been relegated to opposing domains of life, there are in fact many overlaps between the two topics, some of which I have touched upon already and some of which I will expand more upon later. However, one of the most obvious ways social media and work overlap is with the appearance of a medium like Workplace from Meta. This is what I have sought to visualize in figure 2.a below. In spite of the many parallels, overlaps and affinities between social media and work, there has been little mutual interest between studies of working life and studies of social media. This is the topic of the next section of this chapter.
2.5) Minding the Gap: The Mutual Disinterest of Media Studies and Studies of Work

In this section, I outline the research gap which Workplace from Meta falls into. I begin by outlining how organizational studies is admittedly not disinterested in communication. However, such studies have had less of an interest in media specifically. Additionally, I outline how organization studies are also accused of not fully considering organizational life in the context of person life. I then move on to a discussion of media studies. In contrast, I outline how media studies has historically neglected professional life in their study of ordinary media usage. Furthermore, I outline that when work has been discussed within media studies, it has usually been only certain categories of jobs which have been under consideration.

2.5.1) Studies of Work and Media

The role of communication (as distinct from media) in professional settings has been studied extensively, leading to the discipline organizational communication (Mumby & Stohl, 1996). This is
perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the studies which situate communication as the foundational part of organization itself, the so-called *communicative constitution of organizations* school (CCO) (Coreen & Seidl, 2022). At the very least, organizational studies are likely to acknowledge the generalized necessity for communication skills (Conrad & Poole 2005). Organizational scholars have also drawn attention to slide decks, information systems, and spreadsheets and what role these communicative technologies play in shaping organizations (cf. Yates & Orlikowski, 1992; Conrad, 2019; Dourish, 2017). What such media have in common is firstly that they are assumed to belong to the domain of the professional first and foremost, and secondly that they have attracted little attention from media scholars. For their part, some scholars within organizational studies have recently sought to describe and remedy how their own discipline has allegedly lost sight of technology (Plesner & Husted, 2020; Beyes et al., 2022), including media technologies (Beverungen, Beyes and Conrad, 2019).

Aside from this limited interest in media, organizational scholarship has generally been criticized for not considering life outside the organization. “[R]are are those [organizational or management] researchers who engage with the family [non-work] as well as the workplace as a locus of study” as Mazmanian, Beckman, & Harmon (2015, p. 267) put it. This is a fact which they see as particularly regrettable considering the many digital technologies which “enable constant connectivity to the workplace” (p. 262). I argue that insofar as enterprise social media are perceived as a migration of a personal medium into the professional, they represent a partial answer to the call for a study of working life which considers life outside the organization.

However, while enterprise social media have received a sizeable portion of research attention, these studies do not usually consider the personal-domain origins as a significant factor in how enterprise social media are critically interpreted and understood by their users (although see Treem, 2015). While such studies may acknowledge the personal-domain origins of social media as such (e.g. Leonardi et al., 2013), the main emphasis in the existing research is on discussing the efficiency of these media on the organizations’ (or more accurately the organizational management’s) terms (e.g. Wu, Zhang, Huang & Yuan, 2021). In this way, studies of enterprise social media have thus far also performed the boundary work of keeping working life separate from the personal.

### 2.5.2) Media Studies and Work

Just over a decade ago, the sociologist Vincent Mosco (2011) wrote that “labor remains the blind spot of communication and cultural studies” (p. 230), and I would specify that this statement largely
includes media studies. As I will explain in this section, studies of media reception have mainly focused on the domain of the personal. Aside from this, media scholars have mainly been interested in studying either (a) mass media production by creative specialists, (b) work facilitated by social media (i.e. platform or gig labor) or (c) discussing how the business models of social media platforms are reliant upon the unpaid labor of their users. Only recently have scholars begun to focus on the fact that media and work are inextricably intertwined, rather than the role of media only being relevant to a subset of jobs and industries (Laaksonen & Villi 2022; Fast & Jansson, 2019).

While media scholars have generally been interested in how media become “domesticated”, or migrate into the home (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996; Karlsen & Ytre-Arne, 2016), the offices and other professional spaces which these media might have migrated from (cf. Stewart, 2003) have usually been of less interest. When it comes to the divide between the personal and the professional, it seems fair to say that studies of media reception and usage have historically prioritized the personal (e.g., Lull, 1980). This is not to say that such studies would be incapable of approaching people’s media use in the professional domain. In the next chapter, I lay out exactly how my own studies, inspired by media reception studies, aim to do just that. For now, I will briefly outline media studies’ interest in working life as it currently stands.

It is true that media researchers have carried out a plethora of studies investigating the production of mass media content (e.g., Deuze 2007; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2013), and the specific professions associated with such production (e.g., Craig & Cunningham, 2019; Fast et al., 2016). As such, the common view of media-related work within media studies is that is specialised and centred around media production. Tellingly, the most recent companion to labor and media talks in its very first pages about “work in the media” (Maxwell, 2016, p. xvi emphasis added), not working "with" media. Media work is thus commonly view as being for the few, not for the many, despite the highly media-dependent nature of working life (Fast & Jansson, 2019).

The most extensive exception to this personal-domain focus may be found in recent studies of “platform labor” or the “gig economy”, where media scholars have taken an interest in work which is facilitated by digital platforms (Rodino-Colocino et al., 2021; Scholz, 2017; Jarrett, 2022). Even here, there seems to be an effort to still view the more creative or content-producing types of platform-facilitated labor as distinct from the rest of the platform economy. This has resulted in a “peculiar schism between studies of ‘gig work’ and creative ‘social media work,’ with very little cross-fertilization of ideas” (Jarrett, 2022, p. 20). It seems that media studies tend to section off creative work – and creative media production in particular - from other types of work.
In contrast to their lack of interest in workplaces as such, media scholars have been very taken up with how media play a role in the wider political or economic context, including how many media play a role in commodifying activities which are usually associated with the personal. Media scholars have thus been at the forefront of discussing terms such as “audience labor”, “fan labor”, “user-generated labor”, and versions of “digital labor” (Smythe, 1977; Baym & Burnett, 2009; Andrejevic, 2009; Gandini, 2021). What such terms have in common, at least in their original application, is a focus on the commodification of something which was thought to be outside the realm of work, but which is nonetheless integral to the business models of many media companies (Gandini, 2021). This business model of “harness[ing] what people were already doing” and turning this into a “revenue stream” has been argued to be the defining characteristic of social media (Baym, 2015, p.1). Such studies complicate the consensus of social media as entirely belonging to the domain of the personal, though they by their very nature stop short of considering social media usage as belonging properly to the domain of work. I argue that the insights from these studies can help us reconsider the nature of enterprise social media usage, given the coerced nature of media usage in formal organizational settings.

2.6) Meeting in the Middle

In this chapter, I have described how both social media and work constitute something akin to preconditions of everyday life due to several cultural, social, and economic factors. In Article II of this dissertation, I explain it how is seemingly very hard for people to escape permanently from social media, something which may in part be attributable to these factors.

Social media are also in and of themselves contexts which allow for both freedom and coercion. Both academic and non-academic perceptions have long assigned social media and work to separate domains of life, the personal and the professional respectively. However, this division is unsustainable for several reasons. First and foremost, it ignores the many ways in which social media do in fact overlap with work, as hinted at by the green color in the figure below, and which I describe in more detail in Article I of this dissertation. Second, it very specifically ignores the case of enterprise social media, which represents a deliberate attempt to import social media into working life. I argue that this importation cannot happen without considering the origins of social media in the personal domain.
As such, in the next chapter I outline my process and methodology of empirical inquiry. Here, I turn to the related matters of boundary work and the reception and interpretation of new media. As Nippert-Eng (1966) points out, boundaries between work and non-work are “created, maintained, or cast aside by real people” (pp. xii-xiii, emphasis added). When considering which role a particular medium plays in the understanding of these boundaries, I work from an understanding that the reception of these new media at the level of the individual may provide useful insights.
3.0) Methodology and Analysis

In this chapter, I describe the methodology I applied in answering the empirical research questions in this dissertation as set out in Articles III, IV and V. First, I will describe the theoretical underpinnings of my empirical inquiry. Secondly, I outline and reflect upon the initial assumptions that informed my research design. I then proceed to a discussion of my empirical research design, and how this design is informed by media reception studies (Jensen, 2019). Then, I outline the process of data collection from the 28 interviewees in this project. After this, I pause to reflect upon the ethical considerations involved in the data collection process and the research project overall. After these reflections, I then go on to outline how the analysis proceeded, and how the analysis was divided among the different constituent articles used in this dissertation. In the final part of this chapter, I highlight some of the limitations of my approach, and suggest avenues for further research and discussion, with reference to other exemplary empirical studies.

3.1) Positioning and Theoretical Underpinnings of Methodology

A researcher studies a case “when it itself is of very special interest” (Stake, 1995, p. ix). For the researcher, such “special interest” is at least in part the result of reading previous theoretical and empirical works. In previous chapters of this dissertation, I have discussed much of the research which led me to choose Workplace from Meta as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006). However, such a theory-laden choice of case and research question deserves some reflection. While I agree with researchers in the critical rationalist tradition – and indeed in other areas - who assert that “all observation is theory-laden” (Deutsch, 2011, p. 165), I diverge from critical rationalists in their wholesale dismissal of reflecting upon the “pedigree” of inspiration (e.g. Popper, 2002 [1963], p. 35), since such inspiration may heavily influence the research design and process, or at the very least shape the initial assumptions. Given the nature of qualitative research, where researchers are themselves are always present in the collection of interview data, I find it appropriate to reflect upon the initial assumptions of my study and their origins.

Discussions of boundary theory and boundary struggles (Fraser, 2017; Nippert-Eng, 1996) provided me with the inspiration that led me to the work that underlies the two research reviews in this dissertation. For the first review (Article I), I sought to clarify the relationship between social media and work, which I considered somewhat overlooked in the research. I followed this up by
reviewing the seemingly increasing trend for critique of and resistance to social media (Article II). One of the key takeaways from these articles is that the entry of social media into the sphere of work has not led to any noticeable research investigating resistance to work-related media, including (enterprise) social media.

However, what I gleaned from reading the literature for these articles led me to believe that such resistance could be identified, and that Workplace from Meta could act as a lightning rod for such resistance. In part, this was because of what I saw as the mounting criticism of the business models adopted by Meta and similar companies (e.g. Zuboff, 2019; see also Helles & Lomborg, forthcoming). I did not necessarily see this criticism as confined to any specific segment of the population. However, knowledge workers or people with tertiary education were often referred to as being particularly ambivalent about their media usage in work and non-work contexts (Fast, Lindell & Jansson, 2021; Gregg, 2011; Syvertsen, 2020). Additionally, since people of my own age cohort were documented as being critical of – or outright leaving – Facebook in frustration with both the medium and the company (Petersen, 2020, p. 159) I had reason to believe that such resistance might be found with these segments. In addition to these readings, my suspicions of resistance were no doubt also informed by my own positionality, and personally critical opinion of – and frustrations with - Facebook and Meta. I included the anecdote in the Overture of this dissertation ("that sounds awful") to an extent because this was similar to my own reaction when learning about Workplace, and I felt validated by seeing it mirrored. However, even with a group as similar to myself as the final sample ended up being, this proved no guarantee of unambiguous resistance to Workplace, as I will discuss further below.

Although I present the review articles as the first two contributions in this dissertation, this does not reflect the chronology of my process. For example, I worked upon the first review article at the same time as carrying out the research design, data collection and data analysis of the empirical articles, as seen in the Figure 3.0 below.
As will become apparent in the rest of this chapter, the constituent research articles in this dissertation do not merely constitute the means to confirm my initial assumptions. Rather, they are the result of allowing surprise to be the starting point of knowledge creation (Gabriel, 2013). First and foremost, this surprise was the result of people’s interpretations of Workplace from Meta, which diverged considerably from my initial assumptions. In a more unfortunate sense, the world-changing events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also took both my interviewees and me by surprise, and heavily influenced the final stages of my data collection. However, they also opened new avenues of analysis, as I discuss below.

### 3.2) Research Design and Strategy of Data Collection

In the preceding section, I have described why I view Workplace from Meta as a “critical case” (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In this section, I lay out exactly how I approach the case empirically. In the literature on case-based research methodology, there is a lot of discussion about the ontology of cases (see Ragin, 1992 for an overview). I approach Workplace from Meta as an ontologically real object. Workplace is real, even though, like all communication media, it “occup[ies] a middle ground

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Figure 3.a – Illustration of the temporality of data collection, reviews, and ensuing analyses
between material and immaterial reality” (Jensen, 2021, p. 2). This real medium is then encountered, experienced, used (or not used) and interpreted by the people in organizations which use this medium. My own interpretations of people’s interpretations of Workplace are of course highly theoretically informed, insofar as frameworks like boundary theory (Nippert-Eng, 1996) and other appeals to existing explanations (more on which below) greatly inform my research design and the interpretation of the data I co-construct with my interviewees.

My chosen method for investigating Workplace from Meta is qualitative, individual, semi-structured respondent interviews designed to elicit people’s interpretations of Workplace from Meta. This approach is congruent with Nippert-Eng’s observations that boundaries are “created, maintained, or cast aside by real people” (1996, pp. xii-xiii), and that such boundaries are both something which we “produce and find ourselves restrained by” (1996, p. xi). In other words, how Workplace from Meta is understood as belonging to either the domain of the personal or the professional is first and foremost a question of how people receive and interpret media. Such issues of interpretation are especially relevant when discussing media products (Hall et al., 1980; Jensen, 2019).

Qualitative methods of inquiry such as these are well suited to “describing and understanding the central themes which the interviewees experience and live” (Kvale, 1997, p. 40). The qualitative respondent interview is particularly well suited to asking questions “about the individual’s opinions or experiences regarding a particular activity or event” (Sabee, 2017, p. 1470), or in this case, a particular medium across a variety of users (Jensen, 2021, p. 189).

The interviews were with individuals (as opposed to some other constellation) since I work on the assumption that the understanding of the boundary between the personal and the professional, is, for lack of a better term, personal first and foremost. This does not mean that I view the individual as isolated or atomized from their social surroundings or contexts; where applicable in the analysis of their accounts, I will therefore make it clear when and how they do or do not draw on a wider intersubjective understanding of, for instance, Meta as a company or Facebook as a platform.

Above, I used the word “co-construct” to describe the process of data creation in my qualitative interviews. I use this term specifically to avoid the pitfalls of treating qualitative interviews as equivalent to quantitative survey interviews, insofar as the latter are merely used to elicit experiences or

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3 In this trivial sense, Workplace is also a medium in the middle.
knowledge “contained” in an interviewee which are then subsequently “extracted” by the interviewer (see Packer, 2011 for an extensive critique). Instead, I am aware that the interview situation itself constitutes a specific context, and in most cases one where I ask my interviewees to reflect upon matters which they had previously not given much thought to, if any, and to give their own interpretations of the issue. I also asked my interviewees to reflect upon relatively critical matters, such as whether they feel their personal (or professional) data are in safe hands with their organization or with Meta as a company, or what exactly they believe to be the point of Workplace in their organization. As such, I ask my interviewees not just to be conduits or containers of knowledge, but interpreters of their own social (media) reality. I am thus engaging in what the sociologist Anthony Giddens (1984) famously called the “double hermeneutics” of the human and social sciences.

The concept of double hermeneutics also forms a central part of the empirical tradition of media reception studies or audience studies, from which I take a great deal of inspiration in my empirical design (Jensen, 2019). The empirical approach adopted by reception studies has attended to both media content and media technologies in people’s everyday (usually domestic) lives, uncovering the “negotiated meanings” and “social uses” of such media (e.g., Lull, 1980). The tradition of inquiring about people’s own understanding of the meaning of media, as opposed to the interpretation offered by the medium’s manufacturers (in this case Meta Platforms Inc), is often directly inspired by the work of cultural theorists (Hall et al 1980) and has had a formative influence on media reception studies (See Jensen, 2019 for an overview). While media reception studies have historically focused on mass media such as television (Lull, 1980; Morley, 1980), current scholarship inspired by this tradition has sought to shed light on people’s understanding and interpretations of digital and networked media (Lomborg & Kapsch, 2020; Ytre-Arne & Moe, 2021). In the present study, I used Workplace from Meta as the central medium and sought to elicit responses about this medium from respondents across a variety of respondent categories, a tried and tested approach within reception studies (Jensen, 2021, p. 189).

Qualitative interviews, underpinned by the media reception tradition, are well suited approaches for inquiring into the central issues discussed in this dissertation. While scholars rightly emphasize the centrality of “doing” over “meaning” in social science inquiry (Archer, 2000, p. 189), I believe it is appropriate to view the creation of meaning – i.e. interpretation – as an essential lens through which to understand any accounts of doings. In the next section, I will discuss the process of sampling and recruiting interviewees in more detail.
3.3) Data Collection Process

The first step in recruiting interviewees was seeking out organizations which used Workplace from Meta. This was done primarily through an analysis of the publicly available materials discussed in the introductory chapter. From these materials I created a master list of organizations mentioned as Workplace users on social media profiles and websites associated with Meta. No comprehensive list of all Workplace customers (organizations) was publicly available. Even if such a list had been available, I judged that this would not guarantee that the medium was in fact used within a given organization; it could just as well be stored unused in the software library. However, I estimated that a reliable account of which organizations Workplace was being used in – and not just purchased or downloaded – would be in Meta’s promotional materials. To create an overview, I made my own master list of such companies based on these materials, and then a smaller list of companies with physical offices or headquarters in Denmark. To include as many organizations as possible, additional organizations not mentioned in the promotional material were identified by word of mouth. All the organizations were located within the geographical area of Scandinavia, for reasons discussed below. These organizations were identified with the help of people in my extended network, to whom I put out an explicit call asking if they knew of any organizations using Workplace. This resulted in an additional ten organizations not mentioned in official materials. Several interviewees in organizations that had already been identified were also reached through this method of network sampling.

Meta’s promotional materials listed a broad range of organizations of various sizes, and across several geographical locations and industries. In my research, I strove to build an interviewee base that would reflect this range in terms of size and business of the organizations that interviewees worked for. Geographically, however, I restricted myself mainly to Scandinavia, for two main reasons. Firstly, limiting my search to Scandinavia assured the feasibility of in-person interviewing (this was before COVID-19’s emergence, as discussed below). Secondly, it allowed me to narrow the scope of my inquiry to the overall work culture and ethos of the Nordic Welfare states, which are known for having a high degree of digitization and a relatively large number of Facebook users (Danmarks Statistik, 2020; Flensburg & Lai, 2020). Perhaps this is also why the Scandinavian countries seemed to be especially ripe as a market for Workplace, as the product seemed to be extensively marketed by Meta here. I discuss the limitations and particularities of the Scandinavian context in more detail in the analysis and discussion section in Article V.

The organizations my interviewees worked for ranged in size from a single office with no more than twenty employees to international organizations with several thousand. They ranged
across several industries including telecommunications, health and fitness, information technology, retail, media companies, charitable organizations, NGOs, and digital consultancy agencies. The organizations identified are somewhat representative of the industries that Meta themselves highlight in their promotional materials. However, there are several sectors which Meta included which I did not recruit from, perhaps most notably public institutions such as government and healthcare organizations. As a result, my sample is skewed towards the private sector and away from vital (public) services. I avoided recruiting from “essential services” (e.g., healthcare) since such services are under tremendous pressure, and face challenges about media and technology (e.g., Rohl & Nielsen, 2019). I therefore judged that it would be of dubious ethical value to take up people’s time in talking about a medium like Workplace. The lack of interviewees from government services, on the other hand, reflects the fact that I was unable to locate many public services in Scandinavia which used Workplace.

Having identified the companies, I used a combination of network and snowball sampling to identify employees willing to be interviewed about their experiences. This usually involved recruiting a single interviewee from a given organization, and after a successful interview session asking them to introduce me to two or three of their colleagues who they thought might also be interested in participating.

Complications in data collection: COVID-19

Like so many empirical researchers in the early months of 2020, my data collection was complicated by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though much of the how-to literature on qualitative research has treated the in-person interview as the “gold standard” (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006, p. 390), and media-facilitated interviews (via telephone, e-mail, video chat or instant message) as either novelties or emerging methods which needed to justify themselves (e.g. Meho, 2006), there was no responsible way of continuing to interview in-person after the pandemic caused governments to impose lockdowns. The media-facilitated interview – particularly via the, by then, popular video messaging platform Zoom – became prevalent (Bailenson, 2021; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

In the light of this, my target population turned out to be well chosen. While knowledge workers might be the first to complain about entangling their lives with digital technologies (Syvertsen, 2020), the fact that they do complain is the result of their familiarity with
these technologies (Gregg, 2011). In other words, many of my interviewees were quite familiar with speaking over a video chat application and did not seem to mind this type of interview.

In many ways, my area of study was also well suited to the situation caused by a pandemic lockdown. As I explore in Article IV, the domain of the professional had totally relocated into the domain of the personal at the height of lockdown following several government and organization-specific directives urging people to work from home. This gave my interviewees a heightened awareness of the boundaries between the personal and the professional as well as increasing their usage of a medium like Workplace from Meta for staying in touch with their organization, as discussed further in Article IV.

**Interview Guide, Setting, and Process**

Based on some of the initial assumptions about the study and subsequent research considerations as discussed above, I put together an interview guide to make my interviews semi-structured. The semi-structured nature of the interview was chosen to assure a comparable basis of stimulus for the data collection (i.e., asking all respondents similar questions), while remaining open for an element of surprise, detours, and deep dives into unexpected topics (Gabriel, 2013) or alternatively letting outright hindrances and failures open new opportunities knowledge creation (Halberstam, 2011). The overall content of the guide was consistent throughout the research process, with the notable exception that additional questions were added to the later interviews to allow people to clarify their life situation during the months of the COVID-19 lockdown. I also used this part of the interview guide for the relevant follow-up interviews during COVID-19.

The interview guide was designed to allow my interviewees to provide an account of their relationship to their domain of work, and their relationship to social media in general before proceeding to their perceptions of Workplace from Meta in particular, and finally their thoughts on Meta (then Facebook Inc.) as a company. After some initial small talk, I started the interview process by clarifying the purpose and proposed structure of the interview. Although I briefly presented the semi-structured order of interview questions up front (and had established this structure prior to the interviews), I made it clear to my interviewees that I was more interested in following their account than following the strict order of the interview questions as written. I closed the interviews by asking the respondents whether they had any questions or comments about my research. In many cases, this final section after the end of the formal interview proved the most fruitful, enabling my interviewees to reflect upon their relationship to both Workplace and Meta.
As a rule, I let the interviewee pick both the time and place for the interview. Interestingly, there was a great degree of variation in the extent to which people preferred to be interviewed within or outside the temporal and physical bounds of their workplace. Thus, interviews could just as well take place in the living rooms of my interviewees as in the conference rooms of their organizations, and just as well at dawn before the workday began as after small children had been put to bed. Of course, the initial COVID-19 lockdowns, which occurred in the later stages of the data collection, placed obvious restrictions on interview locations (more on which below).

In total, 28 interviewees took part in the study. Most were between 20 and 35 years of age, presenting a demographic category often in their first postgraduation jobs, which is typically associated with a presumed high level of personal investment in the workplace (Petersen, 2020). This age range is most likely an indirect effect of me partially relying on my extended network to recruit interviewees, as I was myself in that age range at the time. The interviewees might primarily be described as “knowledge workers” (Drucker, 1959) and most had at least some tertiary education.

As a result of this purposive and network-based sampling, there is no question that the interviewees resembled me, the interviewer, in many regards. This is an obvious limitation in terms of the broader applicability of the findings. However, it also came with certain advantages, for instance in terms of establishing rapport and trust, or assuring common frames of reference.

3.4) Ethical considerations

As always, the guiding ethical principle in research is that one should “do no harm”. When doing qualitative research, this involves making “prospective judgements” (Hammersley & Trainaou, 2012, p. 71) about any potential harm that might be caused from a research project before commencing data collection, taking steps to prevent any such potential harm, and reevaluating and improving upon these preventative measures as the project proceeds.

In this section, I will reflect upon the prospective judgements about any potential harm that could occur and evaluate my own process in dealing with these. In discussing such potential harm, I draw particularly on the typology of Hammersley & Trainou (2012), while I discuss my preventative measures via the heuristics provided by Brinkmann and Kvale’s (2015) discussion of ethics in interview studies.

Hammersley and Trainou (2012) are particularly concerned with potential harm in qualitative research arising from five different sources. These are (1) physical harm, (2) material harm, (3) psychological harm, (4) damage to reputation, status, or relations and (5) damage to the project or
organization associated either with my interviewee or myself (p. 62). Of these, I judged that the risk of physical or material harm would be very low, the risk of psychological harm relatively low, while the risk of harm to reputation and to the organization deserved consideration.

Regarding physical and material damage, my face-to-face interactions usually did not involve any greater risk of physical or material harm than any normal day at the office or visiting a cafe, with the only real risks being pratfalls or spilling hot beverages over someone. I was careful to avoid such accidents, although probably not more so than if I had not been involved in qualitative data collection.

As for possible psychological harm to my interviewees or myself, I deemed the risk to be low, though admittedly not non-existent. The research was not centered on a vulnerable population or around a topic which I had reason to assume would be traumatic. Both work and social media use are contexts and topics which may conceivably be associated with unpleasant memories, experiences, and emotions, not least because of the coercive nature of both areas, as I have argued. However, my interview guide contained no explicit questions asking about uncomfortable or potentially traumatic situations. It is also my impression that the interviewees did not mention situations or topics which they perceived to be traumatic.

This leaves the risks relating to harm to the reputation or status of persons or organizations, and the risk of harming the functioning of an organization. To reduce such risks, I adhered to the three heuristic principles of ethical research proposed by Brinkmann & Kvale (2015). These are (a) confidentiality, (b) informed consent, and (c) considering the role of the researcher.

I viewed confidentiality as the main tool in preventing harm to reputations and organizations. All organizational names - apart from Meta itself - as well as the names or other identifying details of specific respondents have been anonymized in this dissertation. I deemed this to be the most effective way of preventing any possible damage to the practices and reputation of organizations included in this research, or to the reputation and status of any given person.

My choice not to anonymize Meta Platforms Inc is primarily born out of practical considerations, although I would argue that it is ethically defensible. I would not have been able to use Workplace as a critical case quite as convincingly if I had not been able to explain why it should be compared to the regular Facebook platform, or why it should be understood in the context of much of the research literature criticizing Facebook and Meta. That being said, I would argue that the principle of “doing no harm” should also extend to Meta itself, all things being equal. Hence, I have relied only on publicly available materials in describing the medium of Workplace and have not uncovered any “insider” material which could cause harm to either Meta as a company or specific persons within the company.
While some of my interview respondents were happy to be interviewed with only their own names (and not those of their workplaces) being kept confidential, others asked for full anonymity. As a result, I made the decision to anonymize all names consistently. This was to avoid any speculation about who did and did not ask for full anonymity, or why.

This leads me to the issue of informed consent. Both during the recruitment process and immediately before the commencement of the actual interviews, I was careful to explain the exact research focus of my project (i.e., my interest in finding out how people used Workplace and what they thought of it, without expressing any value judgment of my own). I assured all interviewees that their data would be treated confidentially. In pre-interview correspondence, I made it clear that they were under no obligation to participate, and that they could withdraw at any time before or during the interview. Immediately before the commencement of the interview, I restated the purpose and overall structure of the interview, before asking them explicitly to give their consent to participating in the interview and to having it audio recorded and transcribed. If they gave their verbal consent, the interview commenced. The act of either interviewing or being interviewed as a means of data production was familiar to most of my interviewees, often by virtue of their tertiary education. I thus judged that their consent was informed not only by my own presentation, but also by a broader familiarity with the interview as a known situation.

In the process of gaining interviewees’ informed consent, I sometimes had the opportunity to reflect on my role as a researcher. This usually occurred immediately before the commencement of the interview if my interviewees had any questions about my status as a researcher and the purpose of the overall project. One interviewee was relieved to hear that my funding did not come from Meta itself, as he feared their funding had crept into Humanities research, potentially corrupting the purity of such research.

While I did not reveal any of my preconceptions about my expected findings at this point, I usually took the opportunity to explain where the funding for the research project came from and to state my purpose and status as a doctoral fellow (i.e., writing a dissertation and getting a degree) and my attachment to the University of Copenhagen. Though I did my best not to bring up any of my own feelings about my work into these pre-interview chats, I cannot deny that sometimes they made their way into post-interview chats or into the more open-ended final parts of the interview. The most common outcome from these discussions was that several of my interviewees seemed pleased that they were able to “help me” with my job by talking about their own work. In this way, talking about my status as a researcher served to establish a rapport with the interviewees and opened a discussion about work as a subject, both before and after the parts of the interview formally written down in the interview guide.
On a final note, researching during COVID-19 presented its own ethical (as well as logistical) challenges. I touch upon these in more detail in the body of Article IV.

### 3.5) Data analysis

**Data analysis process**

In this section, I will outline the data analysis process and how I ended up with the findings from the different articles in this dissertation. In Table 3.1, below, I have outlined the different steps taken in the analyses in each of the three empirical articles, including the relevant initial coding, the thematic refinement, and the abductive application of explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progression of analyses</th>
<th>Article III</th>
<th>Article IV</th>
<th>Article V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pertinent questions in interview guide</td>
<td>Questions eliciting descriptions of interviewees’ usage of Workplace and other social media</td>
<td>Questions eliciting a description of how interviewees dealt with the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what role, if any, Workplace played in this.</td>
<td>Questions asking interviewees about their understanding and evaluation of Meta as a company and whether this had any influence on their evaluation of Workplace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant Initial Coding Focus</td>
<td>Descriptions of e.g. Perceived and described uses and usefulness of Workplace, in addition to self-described uses of and opinions about other social media (e.g. Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, LinkedIn) in both a professional and personal context.</td>
<td>Descriptions of Setting up home workstations and negotiating a new everyday routine, along with accounts of how interviewees and their organizations had used Workplace in this period.</td>
<td>Descriptions of Positive and negative opinions of Facebook as a medium, Meta as a company, and Facebook’s perceived positive or negative impact on the world. Descriptions of actions taken (if any) to resist usage of Facebook or Workplace. Justifications (if any) of such actions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thematic refinement

Categorizing self-described usage of Workplace along the lines of:
- Self-expression
- Conforming to social surroundings
- The platform’s affordances for playful communication

Categorizing the tensions of working life during lockdown along the lines of:
- Temporality
- Spatiality
- Sociality

And in each instance noting what role Workplace played.

Categorizing responses to Workplace from Meta along the lines of:
- Ignorance of, knowledge about or indifference to Meta as a company or any perceived transgressions by Meta.
- Explanations of why my interviewees felt they did or did not have anything to "worry about" vis-a-vis Meta.

Abductive application of explanations

1) Relying on transmedia theory to explain the perceived uses and usefulness of Workplace from Meta. 2) drawing on Lomborg & Frandsen (2016) to further explain differences of use along the lines of
- Self-communication
- Social-world communication
- System-communication

Searching for explanations which did or did not account for the lack of increased usage of Workplace during pandemic lockdowns.

Evaluating the available explanations of (1) Ignorance of digital surveillance, (2) Acceptance of digital surveillance, and (3) Digital resignation.

Table 3.a – Step-by-step outline of analyses processes of the constituent articles.

In Table 3.a above, the analyses are described in parallel. However, as already mentioned, the three analyses themselves were not carried out simultaneously. However, as illustrated in Figure 3.0 earlier in this chapter, the data collection and analysis processes were carried out roughly simultaneously. The rest of this section will therefore give a narrative outline of the overall analysis process, and how it resulted in the production of the articles.

Articles III and V, are, as shown in Figure 3.a, largely the result of overlapping research materials, although the analytical foci are different. As I have already mentioned, my initial assumption was that most of my interviewees would express criticism of or show outright resistance
to Meta and Meta products. Thus, my data coding and analyses were based initially on finding descriptions of resistance, protest, or outright non-adoption of the platform, or on understanding any interviewees for whom this was not the case. My secondary focus was on understanding how these descriptions related to criticism of either the organizations people worked for or of digital media in general or of Meta Platforms Inc as a company.

My initial search for employees’ resistance to Workplace was complicated in two major ways by the available materials. First, I realized that concentrating mainly on resistance towards Workplace would leave little room for investigating the ways in which people reported that they used the medium or perceived it to be a useful or neutral part of their everyday working life. This included negotiations of how Workplace was understood in the context of other media. This led me to the analysis which resulted in Article III of this dissertation; to highlight the diversity in the negotiated interpretations of what these people were “supposed to do” with Workplace, I present three case studies which I view as paradigmatic. In my analysis, I found that the reasons why people chose to use Workplace were made up of a combination of individual, organizational and medium-specific considerations. These considerations, I found, corresponded broadly to the tripartite division of communication to the “self”, “social world” and “system” (see also Lomborg & Frandsen, 2016). I thus chose three examples which I viewed as exemplifying the extremes of these three divisions. What was not touched upon in this article is any reference to system-to-system communication, which I deal with indirectly in Article V. Claims (or rather, suspicions) about Workplace affording such communication are touched upon in Article V.

The second major complication arising from my initial assumptions was that people’s dismissal of, ambivalence about, or skepticism towards Workplace were not necessarily the direct result of any criticisms of digital technologies in general. This led me down the path of analysis which eventually resulted in Article V of this dissertation. In this analysis, I focused on my interviewees’ perception of Meta (then Facebook) as a company that relied upon user data extraction as a central part of its business model. This was evidenced in unsolicited references to then current news and TV series. “You mean like The Social Dilemma” said one interviewee, referring to a docudrama at the time criticizing technology corporations such as Meta and Alphabet. “I don’t think [Meta] are conscious of their role in society” said another after a pregnant pause. “Yes, I sat up and watched [the hearing] last night” said a third referring to CEO Mark Zuckerberg’s testimonials to the US Senate about his company’s impact on US democracy. In other words, the widespread criticism of Meta – ranging from their alleged adverse effects on public mental health to their alleged interference in democratic processes - was something which my interviewees were at least to some degree aware of, even if they did not always agree with such criticism. As a result, I looked for
explanations for the so-called “privacy paradox”, in which people profess to care about their digital privacy (vis-à-vis e.g., Meta), while taking no steps to protect it. I therefore approached the data abductively, described as using “inference to best explanation” (Douven, 2011). Thus, I attempted to find the simplest applicable and available explanation from the literature to explain why people showed such limited digital resistance. For reasons I explain in more detail in the article itself, I settled on the idea of “digital resignation” (Draper & Turow, 2019) which views resignation towards potential digital surveillance as a rational choice. I suggest a modification to this explanation, insofar as I infer that the workers whom I interviewed not only leave their digital fate up to Meta, but also to the organization they work for, and in which they have some degree of trust.

Finally, we have the analysis for Article IV. Here, both the data collection process and the interview data were marked by ontological insecurity (Giddens, 1984) in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous two empirical analyses had started out looking specifically for, in one case, resistance to and criticism of Workplace (resulting in Article V), and in the second case looking for an understanding of how Workplace was used in the context of other media (resulting in Article III). In contrast to these two analyses, the initial coding of the interviews used in Article IV had less of a clear-cut analytical angle. This was because both my interviewees and I were trying to make sense of an unexpected new reality. Coding the subset of interviews from the early months of COVID-19 were thus the closest I came to an outright open coding in the present research, insofar as such an open coding is considered possible (for extensive discussions, see e.g. Packer, 2011, pp. 59-81; Tan, 2010). Returning to the terminology of Anthony Giddens, I attribute this to the ontological insecurity felt by a lot of people following the emergence of the pandemic. It was a situation which required a rapid reorientation of people’s rituals and projects (both working and non-working). In collaboration with my co-author, Stine Lomborg, I fine-tuned the analyses to focus on three angles which might serve to refine or reduce this sense of ontological insecurity (in the data, at least). We did this by condensing the themes of the interviews along axes of space, time, and social world – and ultimately relating these back to the overall research focus: Workplace from Meta and the forced disconnection from the usual boundaries and rhythms of work.

As an analytical reflection in the appendix to Article IV, I note that while we refer to our interviewees’ struggles as a “luxury problem” in the text (Bagger & Lomborg, 2021, p. 169), I now find the term rather dismissive. With the added perspective of enduring more than two years of living in the shadow of COVID-19, it has become increasingly obvious that the task of organizing work and non-work is an individualized task, perhaps increasingly so, which cannot be reduced to a “luxury”. On the contrary, setting boundaries between work and non-work has become an

3.6) Limitations and Reflections

While the respondent interview is a common method to collect qualitative data, there are certain limitations which require further investigation. Media and communication studies, as well as studies into working life, have seen several methodological innovations in recent years, many of which could benefit further inquiry into Workplace and media like it.

One limitation is the relatively binary dichotomy of work versus non-work or the personal versus the professional. While media reception studies have historically been confined to the domestic context, and organizational studies confined to the professional context, there are signs that both disciplines have recently started to move “across the work boundary” (Mazmanian, Beckmann & Harmon, 2015). This not only entails viewing work and non-work as rigid opposites, or acknowledging how digital media traverse these contexts, but also recognizing the variety of roles (domestic, romantic, community, etc.) within the personal which may be traversed by any given individual (Mazmanian & Beckmann, 2020). Staying within the relatively individualistic framework I have constructed, recent studies into digital media use in everyday life have benefitted extensively from both a more longitudinal approach and a more active role in data production by research participants (e.g. Lai et al., 2019). My own hesitation in applying such methods in the present inquiry leads back to a lack of clarity about the nature of digitally facilitated work. Although this notion may seem naïve, I was reluctant to ask my interviewees to perform more (digital) labor just to map how they used a digital medium which many of them did not seem overly interested in using in the first place. Nonetheless, such data collection methods do provide some triangulation to help understand the actions and practices and supplement the verbal accounts produced from the interviews. In my current analysis, I have highlighted the usefulness of interpretation and meaning-making, as I judge them to constitute a first step towards actions and doings. However, I am not dismissive of the argument that ‘what is central to human beings are not meanings, but doings’ (Archer, 2000, p. 189).

Furthermore, while I touch upon the organizational settings as they are perceived and understood by my interviewees, further insights into the rhythms and rituals of organizations call for more ethnographic approaches. Here, the work of Catherine Turco (2016) can be cited as a recent example of a study of a single organization and how it was shaped by communications technology.
In my case, I was not able to gain such extensive access, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to the foreclosure of many organizations and physical field sites. What I have produced instead is a set of individual-focused analyses of a boundary-blurring medium in the context of a working life where boundary-setting seems to have become individualized in ways we may not yet fully be aware of.

In my analyses, I have relied mainly on analytical strategies which are abductive, insofar as they are reliant upon existing concepts and theoretical propositions in explaining the available data. Along with my reliance on the methodological approach drawn from media reception, this means that I have brought the critical case of Workplace into dialogue with many other existing fields of study. This is admittedly in contrast to more inductive methods of inquiry, which would focus on coming up with new explanations for a case like Workplace is interpreted. I cannot deny the possibility that a new empirical and theoretical vocabulary could prove useful. However, given the boundary-spanning nature of my case, I would argue that there is much to be gained by bringing it into dialogue with existing research.
4.0) Discussion

In this chapter I return to the overall research questions of this dissertation and discuss them considering both the previous chapters and the findings of the constituent articles. First, I recap and discuss the overall relationship between social media and work as laid out in this dissertation. Next, I discuss Workplace from Meta specifically, returning to the themes of engagement, community and organizational privacy discussed in chapter one of this framing text. I draw on the three empirical articles of this dissertation (Articles III-V) to discuss how Workplace’s promises (of engagement, community, and organizational privacy) invite workers to negotiate their usage of the medium in ways which consider both their own understandings of social media, as well as their understanding of their specific organization. In extension of this, I discuss how media scholarship might fruitfully extend itself more explicitly into working life, even without surrendering its specific media-related interests and focus. Finally, I discuss a selection of relevant possible avenues for future research in extension of the present project, before providing a summary of the discussion chapter.

4.1) The Relationship Between Social Media and Work

The overall research question of this dissertation was concerned with how Workplace from Meta presented a complication of the distinction between work and non-work. To answer this, I find it useful to first provide context by tackling the broader question of how social media in general have been perceived as complicating the boundary between work and non-work. As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, social media have generally been understood as belonging to the domain of the personal or non-work. This is apparently both the popular opinion and the scholarly consensus. It is commonly acknowledged that the revenue streams of social media companies are based on datafying and commodifying what their users were “already doing” (Baym, 2015, p. 1). This very formulation suggests that activities with social media are outside the domain of work proper, and indeed this has been the consensus of much of media scholarship, as discussed in chapter two.

However, researchers from a variety of fields have provided plenty of examples of how social media and the domain of work overlap or interact. I integrate these insights into a cohesive framework in Article I of this dissertation. As I argue in that article, we live in a “post-social media” world. By this I mean that we cannot meaningfully see social media as something separate from the domain of work. It is difficult for people to avoid having to deal with social media per se in the first
place, as discussed in both Article I and chapter two. Because of this, it is also hard to avoid this interaction somehow intersecting with work, as discussed in detail in Article I.

More concretely, this means that social media usage is now a skill which is tacitly required to meaningfully participate in the domain of work, at least for a broad range of workers. This tacit requirement is present in a general sense, as many of intersections of social media and work are mainly the result of the broader cultural, economic, and social forces. These forces which make the domain of work unavoidable (as discussed in chapter two) and enable the domain of work to permeate the boundaries of personal life. As mentioned in chapter one, much of the research on digital media devices has emphasized how these media make the domains of the personal and the professional increasingly difficult to separate. As I have pointed out throughout this dissertation, this separation which is also difficult in the usage of social media. More pertinently, this requirement of the skills of social media usage is more clearly present within the coercive context of a formal workplace (Anderson, 2017).

4.2) Workplace from Meta and the Boundary between Work and Non-work

Workplace from Meta epitomizes the complex intersections and exchanges between work and non-work. Upon first inspection, Workplace brings all the alleged usability and organizational advantages of social media (what I have termed “engagement” and “community” with reference to Meta’s own promotional materials) into a specific organization, while walling off the medium from the allegedly distractive or leaky potential of personal social media (what I termed “organizational privacy”). As an enterprise social medium, Workplace is seemingly a solution to keeping the personal and the professional separate. In this view, all is quiet at the work/non-work intersection.

However, things are not this neat and tidy. Even in Meta’s own promotional materials about Workplace, there is a tacit acknowledgement that social media communication is seen as unproductive (see Sheryl Sandberg’s quote in chapter one) or a risk to individual or organizational information or data security (hence assurances of organizational privacy). What does the alleged engagement, community and organizational privacy provided by Workplace look like on the ground? I have sought to provide answers to this question through the empirical inquires of this dissertation.

The matter of engagement is mainly dealt with in Article III. Here, I explore how people attempt to self-present on Workplace, with special attention to the fact that they perceive Workplace as one medium among many, comparing it to other social media in their own minds, and
shaping their own use and self-presentation accordingly. This highlights that the engagement which Meta promises that Workplace delivers is dependent upon worker’s willingness to make themselves visible via the medium. Furthermore, it highlights how this is a negotiation of visibility which must consider both the context of the medium and the context of the organization.

The matter of community is mainly dealt with in Article IV. One of the key takeaways from this article is that community via Workplace was not necessarily an attractive option for my interviewees during the extreme situation of pandemic lockdowns. When work had moved completely into the home, there was little incentive for interviewees to spend time on Workplace, even if community and company were sought after. The implications of Article IV should remind us that unmediated sense of community – or merely a non-work-related sense of community - is what people may long for when mediated interaction is all there is on offer.

The matter of organizational privacy is mainly dealt with in Article V. Here, one of the main relevant findings is that my interviewees mainly trust that their organization – or someone in their organization – has assured that the data and information on Workplace does not end up anywhere it is not supposed to. This includes not having the data end up in the hands of Meta. Notably my interviewees often emphasize that it would not be as bad for their professional social media use data to end up in the hands of Meta, often joking that Meta already had their personal data.

In summary, my studies suggest how Workplace from Meta, and by extension enterprise social media, may raise as many questions as they seemingly answer for their end users. In large part, I argue that this is owed to the familiarity which users have with Facebook as a medium, and with Meta as company. This familiarity is leveraged implicitly as an asset by Meta in their promotional materials. However, as I argue across the empirical articles, this familiarity is also what may lead people to be hesitant about the medium. Meta says that Workplace will provide users with an engaging way of talking about and doing their work, a sense of community, and a secure platform. Workers might then respond with questions. How exactly should I engage with this medium? What if I don’t want or like the kind of community which is offered? And how exactly is my data and information secured? These are just a few of the concerns which are prompted by introducing Workplace into the context of the professional.

My work across the constituent research articles of this dissertation has demonstrated how the integration of Workplace from Meta into the domain of the professional is interpreted by users in light of both the context of their concrete organization, and the context of social media in general. Workplace from Meta is in some senses a middle ground – a medium in the middle – between these two contexts, one mainly perceived as professional, and one mainly perceived as
personal. Hence, the usage of Workplace should be seen in light of how people seek to negotiate the communicative norms of these contexts. In part, this results in the uncertainties discussed above.

To navigate these uncertainties, workers are not only required to possess the skills necessary to navigate the medium as intended by their managers or by Meta, but also to navigate the medium to achieve their own personal aims. We can understand this in terms of the distinction and overlap between intended, oppositional or negotiated receptions of a media text (cf. Hall et al., 1980) as I have alluded to in chapter three of this dissertation. However, these acts of reception require skills with social media and a familiarity with these media (from the personal domain) which is as good as taken for granted.

4.3) Are We All Media Workers Now?

As discussed in the preceding chapters, media scholars have not been particularly interested in discussing “ordinary” forms of work with media, or of discussing the media which are generally understood as foundational to working life. When media scholars give a justification for this, it is usually with reference to the fact that such inclusive views of media or the digital would be close to “unworkable” (Jarret, 2022, pp. 8-9). However, as other scholars have emphasized, there is “nothing spectacular” (Fast & Jansson, 2019, p.1) about working with media in everyday life. As I have alluded to across the empirical articles (III-V) of this dissertation, the usage of Workplace can certainly afford creativity in usage and in self-expression for its users. These are criteria which scholars have alluded to as cornerstones when discussing more clear-cut workers (influencers, content creators) on personal social media (Scolere et al., 2018; see also Jarret, 2022, p. 24). Do such activities with social media not become “work” or “labor” when they occur in the context of an otherwise established professional organization?

My purpose here is not to argue that media scholars should drop whatever they are holding and immediately pick up the study of human resource management systems, slide decks, or spreadsheets. However, I will argue that the “blind spot” of working life in media studies (Mosco, 2011) becomes harder to ignore once the media of personal life – the media which media scholars have mostly focused on – migrate into working life, as I have argued that enterprise social media are a clearcut example of.

However, even as I argue for an expansion of the scope of media studies, I wish to maintain the need for conceptual clarity. As has been discussed by several other authors (e.g. Gandini, 2021), whenever we discuss new media technologies in relation to work and professional
life, we run the risk of both overestimating their revolutionary impact, and completely overlooking the actual dynamics at play. As put succinctly by the organizational scholars Plesner and Husted (2020):

“When we conflate categories like ’the producer’, ’the consumer’, ’the worker’, and ’the manager’, we surrender our ability to meaningfully identify those actually producing and consuming commodities in the digital economy, as well as those profiting from this process”

(Plesner and Husted, 2020, p. 24)

In extension of Plesner and Husted above, I will stress that the introduction of new media into a context does not necessarily represent a complete upending of existing relations. This is especially true in light in a highly coercive and hierarchical environment such as a professional organization (Anderson, 2017). Insofar as new terminology is needed to describe the new relations (if any) produced by new media, we should be careful that they do not obscure the insights or usefulness existing relations or classifications, as Plesner and Husted argue.

Returning to the question at the head of this section then: Are we all media workers now? Or are we at the very least media workers when we work somewhere that uses Workplace from Meta or a similar medium? Ultimately, this is going to be a question of semantics more than anything else, but I would argue that the most useful answer is no. Returning to the usual definition of a media worker as something who “work[s] in the media” (Maxwell, 2015, p. xvi emphasis added), I argue that there is still some utility in keeping this as a narrow term. In extension of this, there are other reasons we should be critical about applying terms like “media worker” or related terms “creative worker” to people in organizations using Workplace. As scholars and commentators of creative industries have argued, these labels may carry associations of a naturalized collapse between “work” and “non-work” (for critical discussions, see e.g., Duffy, 2017; Glatt, 2022). If we choose to apply such labels, we should be careful not to assume, reproduce or naturalize such collapses or expectations.

In this understanding, we are not all media workers now. However, what future discussions should keep in mind is the increasing degree to which people work with (as opposed to “in”) media. This is especially relevant if these are media where the familiarity is taken for granted (i.e., outsourced to the personal domain), as is arguably the case with the relationship between social media and enterprise social media. It will become difficult to grasp the full reception of new media in working life without understanding how such media relate to the divisions between work and
non-work. As work with media becomes increasingly “[un]spectacular” (Fast & Jansson, 2019, p.1), and these media increasingly afford the ability to reshape and migrate between different domains of life (Gregg, 2011; Beckmann & Mazmanian, 2020), and as work-related media are at least partially the result of coercion (Anderson, 2017; Lupton, 2016) this is an increasingly pertinent perspective to keep in mind.

4.4.) Future Avenues of Research

In the methodological chapter of this dissertation, I reflected upon some of the limitations of my present research design in answering the overall research questions of this dissertation. In addition to these, I here wish to highlight some questions for future research which may lie in extension of the present project.

The themes running throughout the empirical discussion of this dissertation have been about how the individual worker must consider their usage of Workplace in terms of both social media in general as a context, as well as their specific workplace as a context. A relevant next question might then be how a similar negotiation may take place at the level of management and ownership of the medium. In other words, how exactly is the purported organizational privacy of Workplace negotiated and executed by management, IT-staff, legal advisors, and other specialized staff in concrete organizations. If workers are resigning their data to the organizations they work for (As discussed in Article V), then it will pay to have a further discussion about whether their trust is warranted. In this way we should consider ordinary professional organizations as agents in the ongoing discussion about the governance of many-to-many media (Flyverbom et al., 2019), as well as agents in people’s everyday media choice, as discussed in Article II of this dissertation. This represents one avenue of further research.

Another avenue of further research is found by returning to the overall theme of the new future of work. In chapter one, I briefly touched upon how Workplace is in many ways a relatively quaint product when viewed in the context of other recent discourses upon the new future of work. Indeed, I indirectly repeat this assertion by insisting that Workplace does not fit neatly into the prominent discussions of “creative” or “media productive” labor (e.g., media work [Deuze, 2007; Maxwell, 2015]), new forms of organizing the workforce (e.g., platform labor [Scholz, 2017; Smicek, 2017]), or novel ways of value creation (e.g., uncompensated data extraction [Baym, 2015; Zuboff, 2019]). Enterprise social media and the mundane media of working life might be some of the least studied in this discussion. However, I still argue that the emergence of enterprise social
media should ideally be seen in tandem with other technological and social developments for the “future of work”, not in opposition to them. We should be careful not to let arbitrary distinctions between different types of media-facilitated work blind us to similarities and mutual influence. For instance, scholars have recently started to view “social media workers” as comparable to other platform-based workers (e.g., Glatt, 2022; Jarrett, 2022). Similarly, we should be open to discussing whether workers using enterprise social media might best be viewed in parallel with other media-using workers. Future research might thus fruitfully illuminate the parallels and interplays between these media-related developments in the future of work.

4.5) Summary of Discussions

As I have argued in this discussion chapter, the promises of Workplace from Meta as a communication medium which fosters engagement, facilitates community, and provides organizational privacy must be tempered by its empirical reception by workers. What is apparent to various degrees across the three empirical articles is that the engagement, community, and organizational privacy promised by Meta is not necessarily experienced at the level of the individual employee. Engagement with Workplace, a feeling of community or reflections about organizational privacy were not absent from my interviews. However, such feelings were present alongside ambivalent or negative attitudes about Workplace as a medium, Facebook as a medium, or Meta as a company. In part, these ambivalent feelings about Workplace from Meta are thus a result of the personal-domain pedigree of the. When Workplace appeared in the domain of work, many of the feelings associated with Facebook in the domain of the personal came with it.
5.0) Conclusion: And Our Work is Never Done

This article-based dissertation has examined the intersection of the personal and the professional, and specifically how this intersection is complicated by enterprise social media, with a particular empirical focus on the enterprise social medium Workplace from Meta. Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to Workplace from Meta as a “medium in the middle”. I categorize Workplace thusly in a least two major regards which I use to structure this conclusion.

Firstly, Workplace is a medium in the middle insofar as it is positioned outside the core interests of both media studies and the studies of working life. It falls in the middle between two major domains of research interests. As laid out in the theoretical review section of the dissertation (chapter two), media studies have mostly been uninterested in the study of working life. Hence, I draw on scholarship from studies of working life, including scholarship in psychology, sociology, and cultural studies to discuss the so-called “boundary theory” which explores how people wish to separate or integrate different domains of life. My argument in this section is that there are many parallels to draw between the contexts of social media and work, and that there is a territory for fruitful inquiry between them. In fact, there is already significant overlap between them. In the first of the two research reviews of this dissertation (Article I), I highlight how social media already intersects with the domain of work in several ways, not just limited to the emergence enterprise social media. By looking at the territory between social media and work, we can enhance both our understanding of the coerced nature of much social media use, and of the nature of digitally supported work. Just as work and non-work should be seen as mutually constitutive, and occasionally overlapping, we should be curious about the mutual constitutions and overlaps between media and work.

Secondly, the most significant way Workplace is a medium in the middle is in how it is interpreted and used by its end users. For their part, the users perceive the usefulness of Workplace as somewhere in-between the “hedonic” value usually assigned to social media, and the “utilitarian” value often assigned to explicitly work-related media (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Turel, 2014). Furthermore, users’ judgment of the medium is characterized by resignation, a reaction in-between ignorance and calculated acceptance, as discussed in Article V. My findings indicate, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Workplace is received with a range of ambiguity and complexity. This is an ambivalence which is perhaps expectable, given not only the ambivalence which characterizes people’s relationship with their digital media (Ribak & Rosenthal, 2015; Syvertsen, 2020), but also the ambivalence people may have towards their work (Hochschild, 1997; Villadsen, 2017). Even in the context of working life, which is designated by its coercive nature (Anderson, 2017), including
when it comes to media choice (Lupton, 2016), such structures of power may not be the ultimate determinants of how media are used. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I highlight how Meta Platforms Inc frames the medium of Workplace as having engagement through ease-of-use, building community, and providing (data and information) privacy for specific organizations. These reasons may well be why specific organizations adopted Workplace. However, when viewed from the perspective of individual workers, these very same aspects may be a cause for creativity, mundane resistance, hesitation, and ambiguity with Workplace. All of this is in part since Workplace occupies this middle space between personal and professional life.

The present dissertation is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the way media complicate and constitute the boundary between work and non-work. As I examined in the discussion chapter of this dissertation, there are many more fruitful exchanges to be had between the study of media and the study of work. The dawning mutual interest of media scholarship and organization scholarship which I have mentioned in previous pages (e.g., Beverungen, Beyes & Conrad, 2019; Fast & Jansson, 2019) will hopefully afford a fertile ground for future dialogue which is sensitive to not only the nigh-inevitable contexts of life (e.g., work) and the almost as inevitable encounter with media that may be inherent in these contexts. The mutual constitution of – and overlap between - work and non-work (Fraser, 2017; Hochschild, 1997; Nippert-Eng, 1996) should also be tempered by an understanding of a mutual relation of work and media.

There is a wall to work upon, and the work is never done. The work is never done for the individuals who must make constant negotiations about how their media integrate or segment different domains of life. The work is never done for the people producing, owning, and selling these media, as they must constantly be aware of the ever-shifting reality into which they release these media. The media which are taken for granted today may not be taken for granted tomorrow. The work is never done for the many organizations who must make informed decisions about what role media should or should not make in their functioning. Finally, the work is never done for the researchers wishing to make sense of all of this.
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Article I
Social Media and Work: A Framework of Eight Intersections

Abstract

This article presents a review of areas in the existing research where social media and work intersect. After delineating the two terms “social media” and “work,” the article proceeds to outline 8 conceptualizations describing different types of intersection between these two domains: (1) social media before work, (2) social media instead of work, (3) social media for work, (4) social media about work, (5) social media as work, (6) social media under work, (7) work for social media, and (8) social media after work. The article goes on to discuss how these different conceptualizations might give rise to (empirical) differences in how individuals experience social media and work, and how the two themes provide different analytical foci. The article finishes with a conclusion on how research should be sensitized to a world of post-social media work.

Keywords: social media, work, boundary management, identity work, enterprise social media, literature review
Introduction

The study of social media in everyday life is well-researched. It has often focused on social media as a category that is assumed to be largely “personal” (as opposed to “professional”) in the lives of everyday users. Recently, however, the study of the intersection between social media and work has become a subject of interest for scholars from many fields. The nature of work is undergoing massive ontological shifts (Scholz, 2017; Standing, 2011) and epistemological and ethical reconsiderations (e.g., Graeber, 2018; Paulsen, 2014), while at the same time being acknowledged as a clear source of meaning and import in people’s everyday lives (Gregg, 2011; Hochschild, 1997). These changes are often related to new technologies and standards becoming embedded in everyday life, and in the domain of work in particular (e.g., Beckman & Mazmanian, 2020; Duffy, 2017; Gregg, 2011; Precarity Lab, 2019). The phenomenon of social media is one of the most widely discussed technological developments in recent years, and examples of how they have reshaped everyday life are manifold.

However, there seems to be little agreement on what exactly constitutes the intersection of social media and work. Are social media always a type of unpaid exploitation (e.g., Andrejevic, 2011)? Are they only a distraction in the realm of work (e.g., North, 2010)? Are they a venue of general professional expression (e.g., Johnson, 2017)? Are they a way to make a living (Duffy, 2017)? Or are they perhaps a venue through which work itself may unfold (e.g., Ellison, Gibbs, & Weber, 2015)? These are all valid questions that ultimately result in different understandings of the intersection of social media and work. This article provides a much-needed overview of these discussions, laying out the different conceptualizations of the relationship between social media and work as complementary, and potentially informing one another.

In this research review, I identify eight distinct intersections assumed or suggested by previous research. I propose that these intersections can be used as a useful conceptual tool for untangling different individual experiences of the intersection(s) between work and social media and for delineating different research interests. Following the understanding that social media are generally assumed to pertain to the domain of the “personal” (Lomborg, 2012, p. 417), I then examine the different roles the intersections between social media and work may play in people’s lives. In the discussion section of the article, I put forward a list of suggestions for how these different intersections may in turn provide the theoretical basis for further empirical research.
Background and Purpose

In many parts of the world, digital media have become foundational for personal and professional life. One effect of this is that individuals constantly have to choose the appropriate media for any given situation in their everyday life and are often left with the task of deciding how available they should make themselves in different contexts, given that mobile devices now allow people to be available virtually all the time (Helles, 2013; Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). A large proportion of everyday work in highly digitized countries takes place across a host of media (Fast & Jansson, 2019). Here, work functions include online identity management (Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013), boundary management (Mazmanian et al., 2013), practical coordination (Lomborg, 2014), and sociability (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2010). All of this has led to discussions of how different domains of life (e.g., work and personal life) relate to each other in the current media landscape.

In the present research review, I will focus on the level of “social media,” as opposed to digital devices or the mobile Internet more broadly. I do this for three major reasons. Firstly, social media embody a middle ground between the materiality of specific devices and the ephemerality of communication as such. Secondly, unlike other boundary-crossing technologies, such as e-mail, social media are often perceived of as migrating from the domain of the personal into the professional, rather than the other way around (North, 2010). Thirdly, social media are a much-debated topic in both everyday life and research (Lomborg, 2017), while at the same time they make up a foundational part of the “real-name Web” (Hogan, 2013, p. 290). This has led to huge diversity in the identity management being performed on and across these platforms (cf. Ollier-Malaterre et al., 2013; van Dijck, 2013). This will inevitably feed into how their relation to work may be constructed.

Methodology and Approach

This study is a hermeneutic research review, a genre which “capitalises [sic] on the continual deepening of insight that can be obtained by critical reflection on particular [studies] in the context of a wider body of work” (Greenhalgh, Thorne, & Malterud, 2018, p. 3). More specifically, in proposing the eight intersections below and reflecting on the assumptions made in the existing research, the article proceeds as a critical interpretive synthesis of the existing literature on social media and work, insofar as it provides an integrative framework of disparate research discussions (cf. Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). In line with the approach taken by critical interpretive synthesis, the focus is not so much on fixed
systematic approaches, but rather on a process which is “iterative, interactive, dynamic and recursive” (Annandale, Harvey, Cavers, & Dixon-Woods, 2007, p. 465).

The iterations were made through the gradual development and refinement of the intersections, which ended up being eight in number, although there were far fewer at the start. The interactivity was achieved through presenting tentative frameworks to peers for critique and suggestions. Finally, the dynamic and recursive nature of the study was evident in the fact that the framework was often overhauled entirely when new information came to light—for example, once the concept of “digital labor” started to appear unequivocally in the search, the framework went through an extensive overhaul to account for this. The initial source for developing the intersections as a framework was made up of a total of 45 existing research review articles. Of these, 14 were about social media in organizational life, and 13 were about social media in relation to specific professions or industries. Fifteen were reviews of broader social media research, and three reviewed the research on older adults and social media. All the articles were retrieved via Google Scholar. From this base, I proceeded to iterate on the conceptualizations, making more tailored searches for studies as needed.

Before proceeding to describe the eight intersections, I will outline the underlying operational delineations of “social media” and “work.”

**Social Media: A Delineation**

As has been pointed out, the term “social media” is strictly speaking akin to “nonsense” (Lomborg, 2017, p. 8), since it implies that other types of media by definition lack a social dimension. Perhaps a more accurate, albeit more colloquial (but still academically acceptable), use of the term “social media” is as an umbrella term for some Web-based applications and services that emphasize user-generated content (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2013) and many-to-many communication (Jensen & Helles, 2017). In other words, this review is thus mostly to do with what Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) call “social network sites” and “content communities” (p. 62). While social media sites have antecedents in services such as Internet Relay Chat and BBS’s, I also regard them as forming an integral part of the “real-name Web” (Hogan, 2013, p. 290). This “real-name” feature will become central to the discussion of professional and personal identity management, which is a central theme of several of the intersections I present below.

Aside from unspecified, proprietary platforms, the examples I cite will mainly come from Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, YouTube, and LinkedIn. The longevity and market penetration of the above-mentioned platforms has led to them being the subject of much research across various fields. However, the following intersection conceptualizations will be platform agnostic, while still making
use of these sample texts. This is in recognition of the fact that while some platforms may clearly be aimed at either the professional or the personal (e.g., Dutta, 2010), others may have the potential to become a hybrid of these (Archer-Brown, Marder, Calvard, & Kowalski, 2018). These tensions in particular will be the subject of discussion once definitions of the intersections have been provided.

**Work: A Delineation**

“Work” might be an even trickier term to nail down than “social media.” Broadly speaking, the activity of work as “the carrying out of tasks that produce values (of economic, cultural or social kind) that allow people to make a living within their specific context” (Fast & Jansson, 2019, p. 9). My conception of work here is as a context in itself. Understood in this way, a person can not only do work, but also be at work. For the purposes of this article, I will therefore approach “work” as a domain of activities. This means that work can refer to both specific tasks and the context within which these tasks occur. Work may contain one or more distinct jobs, an important point to recognize in light of the changes to the jobs market(s) associated with new media (Duffy, 2017; Scholz, 2017; Srnicek, 2017).

Why not the term “labor” instead of “work”? I have two major reasons for this. Firstly, while I find “labor” to be an adequate description of the activity of work, I find it to be an imprecise description of a domain of life. Secondly, while it has perhaps been diluted over time (Gandini, 2021), the tradition of viewing activities on social media as labor per se is a distinct line of inquiry, as will be shown below. Scholars discussing this intersection are often highly sensitive to activities usually associated with nonwork being appropriated as work (e.g., Jarrett, 2015).

What exactly is work as a domain distinct from? Beigi, Shirmohammadi, and Otaye-Ebede (2019) locate 48 different terminologies for the work–nonwork dichotomy. This should indicate that delimiting “work” will mean very different things to different people. Nonetheless, it seems uncontroversial to say that the barriers which separate work from other areas of life can be psychological, spatial, temporal and/or emotional (Nippert-Eng, 1996). I concede that a clear division of the domains of work and personal life cannot be assumed (see Gregg, 2011; Hochschild, 1997). However, for the reasons stated previously, I will continue with this assumption and deal with any problems it raises as they come up.
The Eight Intersections

The eight conceptualizations, or intersections, are named and structured according to when and how social media intersect with the domain of work:

1) Social media before work
2) Social media instead of work
3) Social media about work
4) Social media for work
5) Social media as work
6) Social media under work
7) Work for social media
8) Social media after work

These intersections are not paradigms that have replaced one another in chronological order. Evidence for all these intersections can be found in recent research. Furthermore, these eight intersections are not mutually exclusive. Different social media may be conceptualized as belonging to different categories, or a single social medium may in some way serve a function in multiple intersections.

First Intersection: Social Media Before Work

Is it possible to imagine a rigid separation between social media and the realm of work, where social media is an entirely nonprofessional activity? If so, in this imagined scenario, a person may have a presence on one or several social media platforms, none of which are used for professional purposes, nor are they in any way explicitly linked to the person's professional identity or their workplace. Even if we could imagine this, there is plenty of research attesting that this separation is far more permeable than it might otherwise seem. This research provides the foundation for this initial intersection between social media and work. One very obvious manifestation of this is in the use of “cybervetting” procedures in recruitment processes (Jacobson & Gruzd, 2020, p. 175). Here, recruitment personnel may scan and vet potential candidates’ online presence—including presence on social media—to evaluate their fit for a given position, or indeed before they are offered any job at all (Melton, Miller,
Jensen, & Shah, 2018). A person entering the job market today is likely to have a history of social media use.

Already, a decade ago, business research findings highlighted the need for professionals to manage their online identities (Dutta, 2010). This is also relevant for the fourth intersection, social media about work. Some studies have found that this is a particular risk area for people in already marginalized positions in society, who may face more constraints on their online self-presentations (Pitcan, Marwick, & boyd, 2018), and might be more likely to face a backlash from their workplace for expressing their opinions (Howard, Kennedy, & Tejeda, 2020).

As with all the intersections, this conceptualization has assumed more prominence as the Internet in general (and social media in particular) has developed into a space where real-name interactions are increasingly common, leaving people with fewer venues in which to segment different parts of their online lives (see, e.g., Hogan, 2013; van der Nagel, 2017). This perceived unity of the self has the “benefit” of aiding social media platforms, which have a vested interest in positioning “the online self as a standardized tradable product” (van Dijck, 2013, p. 201). All of this leaves little room for the molding and segmentation of identity online, which can be both a purposive and vital part of networked life (Kang & Wei, 2020; van der Nagel, 2018).

In summary, this intersection shows us how social media can affect individuals’ relation to their work (including whether they keep—or even get—a job) before they are employed by a company or even before they enter the labor market. In the following intersections, work and social media are seen as more entwined with the domain of work per se.

Second Intersection: Social Media Instead of Work

In this intersection, using social media is seen as primarily a personal pursuit, which in the context of work is regarded with suspicion and must be justified. One early study (North, 2010) delves into the social acceptability of checking personal social media services during work time. Here, the conclusion is that such activities are provisionally acceptable. In this intersection, as in the first one, social media activities are generally not perceived as being meaningfully associated with work tasks. Any activity within this intersection is assumed to be something that an employee does as a private person. Social media use in work time may be tolerated, but it is not actively encouraged.

Generally, research concerned with this intersection views social media in a negative and nonproductive light. Keywords such as “excessive use” (e.g., Cao & Yu, 2019, p. 83), “cyberloafing” (Andreassen, Torsheim, & Pallesen, 2014, p. 906), “addiction” (Zivnuska, Carlson, Carlson, Harris,
Harris, 2019, p. 746) and “technostress” (Brooks & Califf, 2017, p. 143) due to social media use are found in this intersection. Usually, research conclusions recommend that social media policies be implemented, understood and enforced (e.g., Johnston, 2015).

In extremis, at least one scholar suggests that the “primary reason for the rise of social media is workplace use” (Graeber, 2018, p. 137). Even if we discard this extreme view, it is worth considering what exactly people feel they gain from using these platforms during work hours. The usual description is one of hedonic use (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). At the very least, it may be worth considering that social media may conceivably constitute personal “reproductive work” within the domain of work. These questions serve to underline the idea of social media being perceived as a personal activity intruding into the realm of work, which some studies into employee motivation in relation to social media use seems to support (Pew Research Center, 2016).

However, this intersection does not cover all uses of social media during work time—as will become apparent in the following conceptualizations. For instance: If a study or a discussion is based on the assumption that social media can function as potential databases of knowledge for employees—and are not just an opportunity for them to “loaf” around or manage their personal identities and networks—then it will take place in the next intersection.

**Third Intersection: Social Media for Work**

In this intersection, we will discuss how social media are used for professional purposes, but where these professional purposes are not a core or explicit task of the individual user. The conceptualization of social media as a work task or as an essential part of work will be examined in the fourth intersection.

From the perspective of the individual, any social media use in this intersection is voluntary and done with the aim of aiding or improving work tasks—thus fulfilling a utilitarian motive (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). Here, the assumption that social media can have a positive effect on professional tasks is made explicit. An example would be looking for—or providing—professional advice on platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (van Zoonen & Treem, 2019). Here, social media may afford an opportunity for individuals to feel that they are “ahead of the game” (Lupton & Michael, 2017, p. 4).

Aside from being sites for monitoring and capturing information, social media are also sites of voluntary knowledge sharing (van Zoonen, Verhoeven, & Vliegenthart, 2016). Some studies link social media use during work hours positively to work performance but point out “hedonic” and “utilitarian” motives are intertwined in this use of social media (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014, p.
The use of personal social media for work purposes has been strongly associated with employees maintaining a sense of autonomy, but has also been found to add to work pressure, with at least one study documenting the fact that employees seem to regard social media use as a burden rather than a pleasure (van Zoonen & Rice, 2017).

All of this serves to underline the difficulty of trying to categorize social media. Hedonic and utilitarian uses may be hard to tease apart, and while employees may feel “ahead of the game” or draw benefit from creative uses of social media in their work situation, using social media can also become a stress factor. There are no easy answers, and I would argue that this is in part due to “social media”—within this intersection—occupying an ambiguous position in employees’ work lives. They do not constitute an explicit work task here, and while this may result in innovative solutions, it may also lead to a high rate of frustration and burnout—and many other things in between. Social media will not be considered an explicit work tasks before the fifth intersection, but in the next intersection, they at least serve a more explicitly work-related purpose insofar as they help construct and broadcast an individual’s professional identity.

**Fourth Intersection: Social Media About Work**

Here, we find conceptualizations of social media as a tool for broadcasting one’s own professional identity. The first conceptualization (social media before work) was concerned with how social media fitted in before individuals entered the job market or when they did not explicitly connect their social media presence to their professional lives. Here, the purpose is in some sense the opposite. In effect, this is intentionally sharing from the domain of work and into a broader sphere. This is not “work” in the sense of, for example, checking personal social media profiles for recruitment purposes; rather, this is employees bringing their “work” into other domains. This may, for instance, involve “broadcasting” one’s professional identity, perhaps in anticipation of the activities discussed in the first category (social media around work). Another example could be socializing with work colleagues in venues not controlled by the organization (see, e.g., Gregg, 2011), or even the organization of labor unions via social media (Lazar, Ribak, & Davison, 2020). These activities are about work—but they are not in and of themselves the work. Performing these activities does not necessarily provide any material benefit, such as discussed in the third conceptualization. Of course, it may indirectly do so, as in the union example above.

This intersection also exemplifies what may broadly be termed “identity work.” A strong predictor of whether or not employees associate with their place of work on digital platforms seems to be their organizational identification (i.e., the degree to which they feel a sense of
identification with the organization in question; Archer-Brown et al., 2018; Fieseler, Meckel, & Ranzini, 2015; van Zoonen & Treem, 2019). It is also a question of the degree to which a person integrates (as oppose to segments) the domain of work with other areas of life (Batenburg & Bartels, 2017).

This is relevant to the discussion of whether people can be fired for indulging in social media activities. If it is a question of social media usage leading to the neglect of work duties, we are in the second intersection (social media instead of work). However, employees may perform social media activities that do not directly interfere with their work, but which may still give grounds for reprimanding them or terminating their employment (Drouin, O'Connor, Schmidt, & Miller, 2015). I argue that this a question of collapsing contexts or identities. In this framework, the lack of segmentation of online identities can lead the activities of the individual back to the organization. Hence, from a managerial perspective, social media about work may present, on the one hand, a source of danger that requires management, regulation, and control (Linke & Zerfass, 2013), but on the other, an opportunity for positively branding the organization (Lee & Kim, 2020). For the nonmanagerial worker, however, this might be best understood in terms of the “recognition work” that is arguably inherent in a transmedia existence (Fast & Jansson, 2019, pp. 83–105). In this context, people talk about their work via social media, since work is “a pathway to recognition . . . and ultimately to a sense of self-realization” (Fast & Jansson, 2019, p. 87), and this may be achieved by “broadcasting” the processes and products related to their work via social media.

This “broadcasting” of professional activities can be visualized as the domains of work bleeding into other domains of life. However, as the examples above have demonstrated, this need not be a universally negative or involuntary phenomenon. What this intersection and the previous one (social media for work) have in common is that using social media is something that happens ostensibly at the initiative of the individual. Using social media is not an explicit requirement of the workplace. To discuss the using social media as a required activity, I move on to the next intersection.

Fifth Intersection: Social Media as Work

If a person’s job is directly to deal with the production or management of social media content, then we are within this intersection. Here, being on social media constitutes a work task. Usually, social media will be used as a channel of communication to a large (often external, but occasionally internal) audience. For example, a person may be formally tasked with producing or monitoring content on social media platforms. This content production and management, which takes the form of interaction
with the social media system itself, can thus be explicitly described as a task *in and of itself*. If it is an explicit or essential task, it is best understood within this intersection.

Though individuals may potentially use social media for the purpose of self-promotion in the first and fourth intersections (social media before and about work, respectively), in this category, we may find people to whom terms such as “influencer” or “content creator” are applied. Extensive empirical research has already revealed that much of the effort that goes into becoming a professional content producer is “aspirational labor” (Duffy, 2017, p. 4), “hope labor” (Kuehn & Corrigan, 2013, p. 9), or “visibility” labor (Abidin, 2016, p. 90). Here, the *work* for these individuals consists of producing content for social media platforms that they can monetize either directly or indirectly. Some fuzziness will be apparent concerning whether or not individuals conceive of their content production for social media as a central or essential work task, and to what extent they perceive this content production as being for their own benefit or for the benefit of their organization.

As well as content production, a person could carry out the task of *content management*. One fundamental way in which this differs from content production is in its relatively opaque nature. The bulk of this curation is seemingly performed by employees with very low, if any, visibility (Gray & Suri, 2019; Roberts, 2019). What both content creators and content moderators have in common is usually a lack of influence on the governance of the platforms for which they work (Cunningham & Craig, 2019). In this sense, individual social media workers may find themselves navigating a double bind, as they are subject to both the organizational constraints of a workplace and the institutional constraints of specific platforms. And what about the people who actually govern or own these platforms? Their tasks and activities are of course varied (Moran, 2020). However, insofar as their work involves *interacting with* these media, their work may be understood through this intersection.

Undoubtedly, being tacitly or explicitly required to perform tasks involving social media is a central part of many current jobs, possibly in ways that research has yet to uncover. This will be discussed in the two next intersections, where I first discuss what happens when social media form the underlying infrastructure of working life, and then move on to discuss how far we can regard all activities on social media as somehow being *work* for these platforms.

**Sixth Intersection: Social Media Under Work**

This sixth intersection represents one of the newest developments in the intersection of social media and work—using social media as the foundation for the communicative operations of an organization, usually in the form of specifically developed social media for internal usage. This conceptualization is
interesting as it challenges the usual premise of social media as being something that intrudes into, or at best supplements, the domain of work.

In this conceptualization, social media serve as the infrastructure of work itself. That is, organizations may formally or informally rely on social media services for their daily operations, not so much in their externally focused communication tasks (as covered in previous sections), but in terms of everyday internal communications, knowledge sharing, and information management. Sometimes, existing social media may be implemented for this purpose (Archer-Brown et al., 2018). However, it seems to have become more common to implement a service designed for the purpose. These services are not “just” the usual information systems that are ubiquitous in organizational environments (Treem, 2015, p. 54), but constitute services that are typically referred to by a number of terms, including “enterprise social media” (Leonardi, Huysman, & Steinfeld, 2013, p. 1), “enterprise social networks” (Wehner, Ritter, & Leist, 2017, p. 125), “internal social media” (Madsen, 2017, p. 2), or “organizational social media” (Högberg, 2018, p. 1864).

When implementing an organization-specific solution, the listed benefits are usually that the advantages discussed in the previous intersections will now all be contained within a single platform (Ellison et al., 2015), while the disadvantages have been mitigated. For instance, “loafing” on social media is less of an offence if the social medium in question is explicitly work-related (Nivedhitha & Sheik Manzoor, 2020, p. 1167). The flip side, however, is that some studies have found that enterprise social media may lead to feelings of both “social” and “work-related” “overload” (e.g., Chen & Wei, 2019). Nonetheless, resistance to these media is usually discussed in terms of misunderstood affordances (e.g., Giermindl, Strich, & Fiedler, 2018), with only tentative steps being taken toward discussing the necessity of having these internal media per se (e.g., Treem, 2015).

These specific media are usually studied within the realms of organizational communication. As such, while such studies consider the organizational implications and effects of using the software, the perspective of the individual per se is usually not at the forefront. On the other hand, the field of media studies generally has not shown much interest in the role these internal media play in the everyday lives of their users. In the discussion, I will try gesture toward a fruitful integration of these fields.

**Seventh Intersection: Work for Social Media**

The penultimate perspective considered here is that of any social media activity that is regarded as being *always work*. The operational logic behind this assumption is that since all social media platforms
rely largely or exclusively on user-generated content and/or user-generated moderation, these are forms of labor that create the value of the platform. The value is thus in accessing the people and the content on the platform (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2013). This leads to framing such mundane communicative acts as sharing, liking and reacting to posts as a type of labor (Fisher, 2012), or merely the act of having and curating a profile (performing identity work) as labor (Lim, 2020). In this context, such acts do not merely constitute labor required by an employer (this is covered in social media as work), but represent labor done for the benefit of a platform provider (Jarrett, 2015). This user-generated content can then be thought of as “free labor” (Terranova, 2000, p. 33).

What distinguishes this user-generated value from the “aspirational” or “hope” labor discussed in the fifth intersection (social media as work) is in acknowledging the comprehensiveness of the “free labor” performed. Fast, Örnebring, and Karlsson (2016) have developed a useful framework that covers the many ways in which free labor can be framed and understood in the (social) media sector. Looking more specifically at social media, Bechmann and Lomborg (2013) walk us through the different kinds of value production a social media user can engage in. Not all “work” for social media can be considered equally valid, but a common thread in these discussions is how this “work” is a foundational source of value creation for social media platforms and their owners.

The discussion about how far social media are exploitative appears very early on in the research (e.g., Andrejevic, 2011; Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013). Some scholars stop just short of categorizing the act of contributing to these platforms as actual labor (e.g., Srnicek, 2017), while other go much further in condemning these practices (e.g., Precarity Lab, 2019; Zuboff, 2019). Interestingly, for our purposes, even the most critical voices in these discussions have so far largely avoided touching on the nature of organization-specific social media for these purposes. I will return to this in the discussion section.

Eighth Intersection: Social Media After Work

In these intersections, I have stressed how the research has investigated the problem of bounding off the domain of work from social media, assuming the presence of both in a given situation. One possible solution lies in being outside the realm of work. While this might not eliminate the need for the seventh intersection (work for social media), many of the other problems would seem to be avoided. However, my searches revealed little evidence on this subject.

The relative lack of research on social media as a post-work connection to the professional seems like an oversight. As we have already established, the domain of the professional
can be of central importance in modern life (Gregg, 2011). This importance even extends to a post-work condition like retirement (Atchley, 1999; Price, 2000). Though retirees are of course not synonymous with older adults, and both groups are highly diverse, older adults are more well researched as a group than retirees. If we are to take them as a proxy “people outside of ‘work,’” the potential for people to flourish and be creative in a (post-)professional context via social media are underexplored (Givskov & Deuze, 2018) in favor of more narrowly health-related research (Xie, Huang, & Watkins, 2012).

What role might social media play in maintaining a good life “after” work? And how might a reliance on social media for pursuing professional interests and maintaining professional networks be complementary or at odds with trends in digital resistance (cf. Hesselberth, 2018; Portwood-Stacer, 2013)? And what if (certain) social media technologies end up becoming associated with the domain of the professional per se: Would they then become unpalatable to individual users? This remains a question for empirical inquiry. As things stand, this is an intersection that exists mostly through inference, rather than being the result of a large body of research. Even so, this intersection allows us to ask whether we may ever leave the domain of “work” behind if we are still attached to social media in our “post-work” lives.

**Discussion: Work After Social Media?**

Returning to the questions I started with: Are we to consider social media use in working life as a distraction, as an asset, or as infrastructure? The answer is “yes” and “no” to all of these. It is ultimately an empirical question; a matter of which person we ask, and which social media we ask them about. The eight intersections I have laid out in the preceding sections can act as a heuristic in understanding how these social media may have multiple intersection points with working life. Crucially, they will also help us identify where tensions might arise due to a lack of clarity about these intersections. Which intersection are we talking about, and when, and are the conceptions “aligned” in the view of the different actors involved?

For example: What existing or new types of tasks may emerge in the closed or semiclosed systems of enterprise social media? How are individuals expected to relate to and talk about their work on these new platforms (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017)? Is the use of social media for work now mandatory, and has it changed from being an opportunity for individual employees to improve their work tasks to being a requirement that puts the onus on the individual to stay informed? What if a person’s job suddenly requires them to have a social media presence? Does this then constitute a reshaping of social media as work (Waters, 2020)? What are the implications of
social media no longer exclusively being viewed as a potential agent of intrusion? How do the tech companies developing these platforms and their individual users perceive and manage their legacies on these platforms after they leave work? These are all questions related to how social media restructure the domain of work, which can also be regarded as overlapping with how social media have ostensibly restructured organizations and organizing per se (e.g., Lovink & Rossiter, 2018; Shirky, 2008).

Furthermore, the emergence of internal social media has in itself created a range of new tensions. Are enterprise social media merely “a mechanism to keep cyberslacking at bay” (Niveditha & Sheik Manzoor, 2020, p. 1167), and does this represent an appropriation of a potential venue for performing small boundary transitions within the domain of work? How are we to reframe the discussions of social media usage as labor when this usage happens not only in the context of tech platforms, but also in the context of workplaces? Are perceptions of social media as a tool for exploitation per se now being compounded by the potential for them to be used as a tool for exploitation and datafication by employers?

And what exactly are the limits of social media themselves? My cited examples have mostly been concerned with relatively unambiguous types of media, but this should not distract us from the fact that many platforms are taking on the appearance and affordances of social media. Sometimes this is a more permanent feature of platforms associated with new forms of work (Alaimo, Kallinikos, & Valderrama, 2020). Conversely, the trend for certain social media giants to converge their services would now seem to make it almost inevitable that they will play a key role in shaping the domain of work (Helmond, Nieborg, & van der Vlist, 2019; Plantin, Lagoze, Edwards, & Sandvig, 2018; Plantin & de Seta, 2019).

Ultimately, these are questions that need to be addressed empirically. Only by looking at the practices, discourses and actions of people and organizations involved with social media and work can we hope to gain an understanding of these issues. The aim of this article has been to untangle the various concepts based on a review of the relevant research literature. I encourage future research to find out how these concepts are “tangled up” on the ground.

Conclusions

We live in a world of post-social media work. Not that we are somehow past social media, merely that social media has impacted the domain of work to the extent that it is now very difficult to analytically separate social media from the domain of work. If social media were originally seen as an invasion or distraction in the world of work, recent research seems to indicate that they have been appropriated
into and now form part of the domain of work. We should be prepared for future research that will perhaps describe social media as belonging to the realm of the professional and intruding into the realm of the personal. I would therefore encourage further research into the role that social media play in people’s working lives.

Social media’s relation to working life is not solely a question of aspirational labor, free labor, or professional development: It is all of these things, and more. This article has enumerated eight ways in which these two areas intersect, with examples drawn from the most recent literature on the topic. Strictly speaking, as long as both “social media” and “work” exist in people’s lives, the ways in which they are mutually constituted will continue to be relevant, not least as an object of empirical communication research. As an extension of this, I suggest that future research should be sensitive to the very multifaceted nature of “work” and should consider the role that social media play in both supporting and shaping this domain.

Both “work” and “social media” are areas in flux. “Work” is undergoing an ontological shift (Standing, 2011), social platforms are under constant development both as objects of study and as material technologies (Helmond et al., 2019; Lomborg, 2017), and sometimes these themes overlap (e.g., Gray & Suri, 2019; Scholz, 2017; Srnicek, 2017). Crucially, these changes are not always felt as either exploitative or particularly problematic in people’s lives (Andrejevic, 2011). However, we should make sure that we carefully consider the different ways that working with social media may be constructed and be curious about when different conceptions clash and when they mesh.

References (Article I)


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van Zoonen, W., & Treem, J. W. (2019). The role of organizational identification and the desire to succeed in employees' use of personal twitter accounts for work. *Computers in Human Behavior, 100*, 26–34. [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.06.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.06.008)


Article II
Digital Disconnection Research in Review: What, How and Who?

Abstract:

The backlash against digital media has manifested in everyday practices of digital disconnection, or deliberate non-use of media. This chapter seeks to create an overview of the last decade of empirical disconnection research, tracing both its overarching tendencies and its boundaries. This is done through an analysis of 346 empirical studies on digital disconnection. For the purposes of this chapter, digital disconnection research is defined by a research ethos which does not see the act of media non-use or restricted media use as something to be remedied. In review, the typical interest of the research has been in studying relatively young and individualized agents’ disconnection from social media, a disconnection which is often temporary or partial. Therefore, the discussion portion of the chapter considers the opportunity for the openness of digital disconnection studies to extend even further, with particular emphasis on structures and contexts where disconnection may not only be problematized by the imperatives of “always on” communication, specifically in working life.

Keywords: digital disconnection; systematic literature review, social media, problematizing review, disconnection turn
Introduction

The recent “disconnection turn” (Fast, 2021) in media and communication studies has brought increased scholarly attention to the ambivalences and resistances in everyday media and communication use. This turn has happened within the halls of academia, where it has resulted in a “nascent but rapidly developing” field of research (Beattie & Cassidy, 2021, p. 396) but has also been “mainstreamed in broader cultural debates and popular expressions” (Lomborg & Ytre-Arne, 2021, p. 1530). Thus, we may encounter a large degree of self-help literature seeking to help us live a better life with our digital devices (Enli & Syvertsen, 2021), advertisements for “digital free tourism” (Ozdemir & Goktas, 2021) or regularly encounter news items describing an ostensible “techlash” (Helles & Lomborg, this volume; Jespersen & Albris, this volume).

While there is still much terminological contestation (Lomborg and Ytre-Arne, 2021) I argue that digital disconnection studies as an emerging field is characterized by its prevailing research normativity or ethos. In this ethos, non-use or restricted use of digital media is viewed either neutrally or positively, rather than as a problem (Syvertsen, 2017). In other words, this research is characterized by an openness to the possibility that non-use may be viewed as both “meaningful and necessary” (Bucher, 2020, p. 612) to the people involved, while still maintaining the ability to critique disconnections limitations (Sutton, 2020). As I will explain further below, this is seemingly a relatively recent change in the interests of scholars, and in sharp contrast to previous treatment of media criticism and media non-use (cf. Drotner, 1999; van Dijk, 2006).

The question then remains how far-reaching this normativity of digital disconnection currently is. Which domains has this openness extended into, and where have we yet to see it emerge? In answering this, the present chapter aims to summarize and analyse the state of the art of recent empirical studies in digital disconnection. I do this through an analysis of a systematic sample of 346 empirical studies of actual experiences of disconnection, presented as a review of the field of disconnection research which is both scoping and problematizing in nature (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020; Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). The review is scoping insofar as it draws the existing boundaries and research preoccupations in disconnection studies in the last decade. It is problematizing insofar as it questions why the normativity of disconnection has thus far not been taken further.

The present review asks first and foremost “what” people have been disconnecting from in the research thus far, “how” this disconnection is undertaken and “who” has been constructed as the agents capable of doing disconnection. In answering this, I emphasize that the target of disconnection is almost exclusively some type of “always on” or “always happening” medium, usually a social medium. Secondly, the method of disconnection is usually temporary or partial,
which serves to corroborate the general viewpoint that attempts at digital disconnection are futile, insofar as people seem to “relapse” into using these media (Baumer et al., 2013). Third, the disconnecting agent is usually understood and studied as a responsibilised individual.

In the discussion and conclusion sections I highlight avenues for future research in digital disconnection. Particularly, I advocate looking beyond the individual media user towards the organizations and institutions in which everyday life takes place (Perrow, 1991) and recognizing the vital role that these contexts play in what we may or may not actually be able to disconnect from. In my discussion, I exemplify this through the media-dependent and -entangled working life (Bagger, 2021; Gregg, 2011; Fast, 2021) as a prime example of such a structuring context, though I concede that it is far from the only domain digital disconnection research has yet to enter. In summary, I argue that the openness of digital disconnection studies may extend even further.

**Background: Digital Disconnection Studies and the Disconnection Turn**

Whether one starts the story with worries about television addicts (Vanden Abeele & Mohr, 2021), concerns about landline telephones eroding private spaces (Rymarczuk, 2016) or all the way back with Socrates’ alleged dismissal of written text (Peters, 1999), resistance and criticism of media is hardly a new phenomenon. However, the last decade or so has seen a steep increase in the interest in resisting or refusing the use of digital technologies, what has been termed the “disconnection turn” (Fast, 2021). The last few years, especially, we have seen an increased interest in the matter, manifested in several anthologies and journal special issues (Chia, Jorge & Karppi eds, 2021; Jansson & Adams eds, 2021; Lomborg & Ytre-Arne, 2021; Karsay & Vandenbosch, 2021). While the term digital disconnection may have its origin within media studies, the interest in non-use is present across a variety of disciplines, ranging from tourism studies (Ozdemir & Goktas, 2021) information systems research (Solimann & Rinta-Kahila, 2021) and psychology (Biedermann et al., 2021).

This all corroborates that we are in the middle of a “disconnection turn” (Fast, 2021) which reaches across several disciplines. While we are turning then, we should make sure we have a good lay of the land. What ground has the body of disconnection research covered thus far, and which areas of the map are still underexplored?

The difference which makes a difference in digital disconnection studies is that acts of resistance towards media usage as not *a priori* seen as the result of technophobia or “media panics” (Drotner, 1999) nor as a “digital divide” which must be bridged for the betterment of society (van
Dijk, 2006). In broad terms, the underlying assumption of this diffuse research agenda is that the refusal and non-use of digital media and communication tools may be seen as something valuable and worthwhile rather than as a technical or social gap which must be bridged (Syvertsen, 2017). Although rarely explicitly stated, it seems this line of research tacitly accepts that treating non-communication with suspicion is ultimately untenable (see Peters, 1999). Digital disconnection can thus be both “meaningful and necessary” (Bucher, 2021) at least to the people involved.

Disconnecting from digital media is not usually viewed – either in practice or in research – as a binary matter of “on” or “off”, “use” or “non-use”. Instead, the research usually proceeds from an assumption that disconnection presupposes and interacts with its opposite, connectivity (Hesselberth, 2017). Non-use could almost be taken for granted as a field of study if it wasn’t in contrast to a “backbone” of ubiquitous media usage (Lomborg & Ytre-Arne, 2021). Accordingly, disconnection practices are usually the result of (non-)users re-evaluating meanings and values or negotiating ambivalences (Ribak & Rosenthal, 2015).

Several single studies and meta-analyses have reflected upon the efficacy of disconnection in terms of aiding wellbeing (Biedermann et al., 2021), while others have sought to disentangle the mechanics of why disconnection occurs (Soliman & Rinta-Kahila, 2021). My purpose in this chapter is to make clear who is being studied as disconnecting agents, how they are disconnecting and what the subjects of study are disconnecting from.

Moe and Madsen (2021) scope out several related phenomena “beyond media studies” which aid in the understanding of the disconnection turn. Thus, they rightly situate disconnection within broader trends, looking at the trend from the “outside” of media studies and into the discipline. Complementary to this, I seek to understand how far we can see digital disconnection as something expanding beyond its native domain of media studies, looking from the inside and seeing how far out we can go, as it were.

**Review Method**

**Sampling process: Finding actually existing disconnection**

The aim of the sampling of the present study was to locate empirical studies of *actually existing disconnection*. In other words, the studies included had to be based on an empirical inquiry into people disconnecting from digital media. Primarily theoretical interventions and critiques were thus excluded from the sample. Additionally, the disconnection practices under study had to be treated
within the normative scope of “digital disconnection” and rather than viewed as an a priori problem to be solved.

The sampling proceeded by a process of hand-picking the broadest possible sample relevant studies through citation chain analysis (Levy & Ellis, 2006). I deemed sampling via citations preferable to the otherwise commonly used methods of sampling via a keyword search for two major reasons. Firstly, digital disconnection research has a large degree of terminological contestation. Scholars thus use terms as broad as “disentangling”, “non-use”, “unplugging” and “detoxing”, all of which have a myriad of other uses. Secondly, keyword searches did not provide a reliable way of distinguishing between empirical and non-empirical studies. An extensive hand-selection procedure would thus have to be called for in any case. My chain of search started from two points, one being key empirical texts on digital disconnection (see table 1) and the other being existing subdiscipline-specific research reviews of digital disconnection (see table 2). First, the citation lists of these texts were screened for relevant studies. Secondly, if any relevant studies citing these initial studies were found, studies citing these newly included studies were then in turn screened for inclusion. The process is visualized in figure 1. This strategy followed from an assumption that empirical studies will tend to cite other relevant empirical studies.

In the first prong, the search started from eight existing systematic reviews on disconnection research or related phenomena. All these reviews tended to be domain-specific and generally emphasize quantitative studies, as opposed to studies using other methods. As such, there was virtually no overlap between the texts they each reviewed. The texts analysed in these review articles were then individually screened for inclusion in the present study, before proceeding further. In the second prong, nine key empirical studies on disconnection were selected as starting points. These were identified through desk research as being highly cited (>100 citations) as well as being distributed across several disciplines.

In each prong, articles, monographs, anthology chapters and theses in these citation networks were individually screened in their title, abstract and keywords to ascertain whether they built upon an empirical study of disconnection from a media a communications technology. “Disconnection” was understood any type of non-use, whether temporary or indefinite, provided this non-use happened with consent of the disconnecting agent. This was to exclude studies where accidental internet outages or deliberate government shutdowns disconnected entire non-consenting populations (e.g., Rohman & Ang, 2021). The media which people disconnected from were likewise broadly defined as anything that enabled and expanded communication capabilities either interpersonally or intra-personally (Jensen & Helles, 2011; Lomborg & Frandsen, 2016). Any technology was considered a medium if it enabled communication on either a many-to-many (e.g.,
social media, collectively used information systems), one to many (mass communication devices such as television, radio), one-to-one (e.g., texting) or self-to-self (e.g. self-tracking apps, smart devices) basis.

Existing Reviews on Disconnection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review Article</th>
<th>Brief Summary</th>
<th># Texts Reviewed</th>
<th># Texts applicable to present review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biederman, Schneider and Draschler, 2021</td>
<td>Systematic review of digital self-control interventions.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eriksen, 2020</td>
<td>Systematic review of social media restrictions and subjective well-being</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huang, Jin &amp; Coghlan, 2021</td>
<td>Review of research on &quot;innovation resistance&quot; among consumers</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kania-Lundholm, 2021</td>
<td>Call for a critical research agenda,</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozdemir &amp; Goktas, 2021</td>
<td>Bibliometric analysis of the research trends on “digital detox holidays”</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radkte et al., 2021</td>
<td>Systematic review of the effectiveness of digital detox on excessive smartphone use</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliman &amp; Rinta-Kahila, 2020</td>
<td>Review of phenomenon of “discontinuance” in Information Technology studies.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soliman &amp; Tuunainen, 2021</td>
<td>Study on “volitional” Information Systems being rejected, with an included review of previous studies</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1* – Overview of the existing research reviews on digital disconnection across disciplines.

4 The list of texts analyzed was graciously provided by the original author.
### Key Empirical Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Citations</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Academic Field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baumer et al., 2013</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>Exploration of Facebook non-use</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brubaker et al., 2016</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>Users leaving the app Grindr</td>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickinson et al., 2016</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>The desire for mobile disconnection among tourists.</td>
<td>Business and Trade Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epstein et al., 2016</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>Discontinuance of self-tracking devices.</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakkarainen, 2012</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>Older computer non-users.</td>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light, 2014</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>Disconnection from and with social networking sites.</td>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearce &amp; Gretzel, 2012</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>“Technology dead zones” in tourism</td>
<td>Business and Trade Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portwood-Stacer, 2013</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>Quitting Facebook and “Media Refusal”.</td>
<td>Media and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selwyn, 2006</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>“Non- and low-users” of computers.</td>
<td>Cultural studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stieger et al., 2013</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>Contrasting users and quitters of Facebook.</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2 – Key empirical studies in disconnection research, how often they have been cited, a summary of their content and their home disciplines.*

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5 For this classification, I relied on the categories from the Danish Agency for Higher Education and Science’s classification in the 2021 listing of the Bibliometric Research Index (BFI)
Exclusion criteria

The most common reason for exclusion of texts from the sample was that they framed the non-use of specific technologies as primarily a gap to be bridged. As discussed above, this runs counter to my delineation of disconnection for the purposes of this review. For related reasons, studies on the adjacent phenomenon of “news avoidance” were also excluded from this review as there is some controversy about whether they fit the normative framework of “digital disconnection”. For similar reasons, research on the non-use of communications technologies in telemedicine were also excluded from the search (see Reinhardt et al., 2021 for a review), as this is also a field were non-use of the relevant technologies are viewed as problematic first and foremost. For present purposes, disconnecting from your internet provider and disconnecting from your healthcare provider is thus not comparable.

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6 I owe this insight to Hallvard Moe and Brita Ytre-Arne
Scope and limitations of final sample

The final sample consisted of 346 texts on digital disconnection. These included 220 research articles, 17 book chapters, 86 conference papers, four monographs, seven dissertations and twelve master’s degree theses. The oldest studies were published in 2010, with most studies (86%) being from 2015 or later, thus lending credence to the idea of the “disconnection turn” as a genuine recent development (Fast, 2021). The present overview stands as the thus far broadest scoping of research into actually existing digital disconnection.

A limitation of the present review is that it can only describe how digital disconnection has been studied. Therefore, it can offer few insights about where digital disconnection might happen, outside of sketching research gaps and conjecture about fertile grounds for future studies. The primary purpose of the analysis of this chapter will thus be of problematizing the research (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020), rather than empirically or meta-analytically mapping the landscape of digital disconnection.

A second limitation of the sample is that it cannot account for studies which have no interaction, first-, second- or third hand, with the central texts mentioned above. There may be disconnection texts unaccounted for which have yet to enter dialogue with the main body of research, although I remain adamant that I have sought to locate digital disconnection studies outside of any narrow disciplinary boundaries, as indicated by the domain-specific reviews listed above.

Coding process

With the final sample in hand, I proceeded to ask the three basic questions of the body of disconnection research: (1) What people are being studied as disconnecting from (i.e., how are the objects of disconnection defined within the given study), (2) how this process of disconnection taking place (is it caused by the researcher or not, is it temporary or indefinite) and (3) who is being studied as doing this disconnection (i.e., who is constructed as having the agency to disconnection, and are they sampled according to any specific demographic characteristics).
Findings

The What: Always on, Everywhere on, Everybody on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of Disconnection</th>
<th># of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook in conjunction with another social medium</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other named social media (e.g. WeChat, Instagram, Twitter)</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified social media</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devices</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphones</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile phones</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wearables</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insideables</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers (desk- or laptop)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart devices, Internet of Things, Robots</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Various Media, unspecified</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Media</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Systems</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Connectivity in General</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 – overview of the targets of disconnection in the studies sampled

Most of the media targeted for disconnection are characterized by being some combination of “always on” (Baron, 2010), “always happening” or creating access across temporal or spatial boundaries (Helles, 2013). This goes for social media, smartphones and even the few digital games which appeared in the sample, which were characterized by their perpetuity and open-endedness (Debus et al., 2020). Digital disconnection studies thus seem to have coagulated clearly around resistance to media which create an “evertime” (Morrison & Gomez, 2014) rather than traditional mass media such as the television or radio.

Social media appear as a prime target of disconnection practices. In fact, roughly half of the studies in disconnection are concerned with people disconnecting from a social medium (47%). The social media platform Facebook is the most named target of disconnection, either on its own (16%)
or in conjunction with other media. The large user bases of social media as such may partially explain their prevalence in disconnection research. However, there is far from any correlation between the user base of a medium and the number of disconnection studies on it. For comparison, only four studies focused on disconnection from the social medium WeChat, which has over a billion daily users (Conell, 2022).

It should be considered that social media tick several boxes which make them eligible for popular resistance, while at the same being hard to get away from. They are on the one hand viewed as a negative influence and ultimately nonessential while at the same time seeming to be enough of a part of the social fabric of everyday life that quitting is far from an easy tradeoff. This is in addition to all the technical barriers to deleting one’s account or otherwise quitting (Karppi, 2018). This difficulty in exiting will also become apparent in the section on how people are able (or not able) to disconnect.

While social media are by far the biggest single block, the targets of disconnection are both occasionally more granular and far more abstract and nebulous. The object of disconnection may be constructed as internet-connected devices themselves (smartphones, laptops etc) or as internet connectivity per se. In terms of devices, the smartphone certainly takes the lion’s share of disconnective attention (15% of studies). Laptop- or desktop computers are only rarely constructed as objects of disconnection.

Self-tracking devices, which are increasingly being counted under the auspices of media studies (Lomborg & Frandsen, 2016), are also one of the media categories which people are disconnecting from. Notably, much of the usage of self-tracking technologies is generally best described as “episodic” (Gorm & Shlovski, 2019), with people dipping in and out of usage. Here, we can draw a parallel to studies of disconnection from social media sites similarly emphasize cycles of “leaving and relapsing” (Baumer et al., 2013). Interestingly, while self- and body-tracking technologies often categorized as a technology for surveillance of workers ( Gregg, 2018), and are still to this day widely criticized in this context (e.g. Mueller, 2021), the present sample of disconnection studies overwhelmingly discuss resistance to tracking in a non-professional context. Only a single study a has looked at resistance to so-called “insideables” in workplaces (Gauttier, 2019; but see also Hansen, this volume).

Just as tracking in a professional context is largely absent from disconnection studies, so are the “grey media” (Conrad, 2019) of corporate life. Notably, there are studies which discuss the moral value of keeping media which are perceived to be intrusive or non-work related outside of the context of work (North, 2010), but seemingly little interest in seeing resistance to the media usually associated with working life as “meaningful and necessary” (cf. Bucher, 2020). Within the sample,
little attention has been paid to quitting spreadsheets, slide decks, intranets, or e-mail platforms as communicative media despite the pervasiveness of these in everyday communication (Yates & Orlikowski, 2007; Waller & Ragsdell, 2012). The refusals of more concrete software packages or communication solutions are usually only the subjects of a single study each. This absence of working life as a central tenet in disconnection studies has been noted before with the most probable explanation being that media connectivity is seen as a good within the context of working life (Fast, 2021). I will return to this absence in the discussion section.

Despite the propensity to study disconnection among university-age populations (more on which below) resistance to school-specific media or platforms are also completely absent from the present sample. It seems unlikely that this is owed either to a universal userbase approval of these media – as I am sure most of my readers do not need to be told – nor to the fact that education-specific media can be disentangled from the larger political economy of digital platforms (see Cone & Lai, this volume). However, theoretical interventions have discussed the desirability of keeping digital media out of – among other locations – primary and secondary schools (Beattie & Cassidy, 2021). What this suggests, similarly to the discussion about workplaces above, is that while there may be institutional and organizational interests at play in keeping media which are seen as intrusive to a certain context out (e.g., work, school), there is less interest in considering the media native to these contexts as intrusive.

The How: Temporary Disconnection or Restrictions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin of Disconnection</th>
<th># of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Existing (i.e., independent of researcher)</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Participation (i.e., facilitated or instigated by a researcher)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Disconnection</th>
<th># of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refusal (i.e., volitional non-use for an indefinite period)</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resistance</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continued usage with (Self-)Restrictions</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Retreats or holidays limiting media use</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 - Showing the origins of disconnection under study and the method of disconnection

Much of the disconnection under research is characterized by being temporary rather than permanent (49%), or by taking the shape of (self-)restrictions on access or use of media rather than outright media refusals (43%). However, most of the disconnection under study does not owe its existence to the intervention of the researchers, this corroborates the assertion that disconnection in
a prominent cultural phenomenon (Lomborg & Ytre-Arne, 2021; Moe & Madsen, 2021). Often, the researcher-initiated disconnection research is concerned testing the efficacy of some app or plugin meant to limit connectivity and digital time-waste. In these cases, the solution to ubiquitous connectivity is thus thought to be found within other technologies.

Aside from experiments, the most common way to initiate digital disconnection is by way of a physical retreat of some sort. These retreats may take the form of branding specific locales for “digital free tourism” or creating specific camps or retreats where likeminded people can otherwise join in practices of mindfulness or analogue interaction. By their very nature, these retreats and holidays are exceptional in terms of not being interwoven in the fabric of everyday life, but rather constitute escapes from everyday life. I thus treat them as something different from what I term the practice of “refusal”, as seen in the table above.

A few studies have looked at account deletion and migration from social media platforms as more permanent ways of disconnecting. A study in the platform Tumblr exemplifies that a broad-scale user migration from even relatively popular platforms is hardly unheard of (Edwards & Boellstorff, 2020). We should bear this in mind whenever the futility of disconnection is expounded. While we can question the feasibility of disconnection from “the digital” per se, we should remember that concrete media platforms both can and do end (Corry, 2021).

Perhaps disconnection studies are here caught in the tensions between non-usage and usage (Hesselberth, 2017). On the one hand, disconnection is only studied from the most ubiquitous (and ubiquitously connective) devices and services. Attempts at disconnection from these objects is seen as novel, but certainly might lead one to think that it is futile. On the other hand, platforms, and services without a near-universal adoption, where resistance and refusal might have a great degree of impact on the continued life of the medium, is given far less interest. I shall return to this point in my discussion.
The Who: Responsibilised, individualized and young disconnecting agent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disconnecting Agent</th>
<th>#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Classes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businesses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Communities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households or Families</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camps and Clubs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fandoms</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Community</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Userbase</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5 – overview of who is constructed as the disconnecting agent in the studies at hand.*

The disconnecting agent is by far most often constructed as an atomized individual. What this means is that digital disconnection is overwhelmingly thought of as an individualized activity undergone by people alone. This is congruent with the linking of digital disconnection with broader cultural trends of responsibilisation, as noted by other scholars (Fast, 2021; Moe & Madsen, 2021). In brief, responsibilisation describes the process by which individuals are made responsible for tasks which would previously have been undertaken by others, state agencies or other institutions. This individualizing and responsibilising discourse is prevalent in the “how to” literature on disconnection (Enli & Syvertsen, 2021).

Here, I would invite communications scholars to pause and consider the usefulness of considering digital disconnection from such a “single user” perspective. If communication is in a broad sense the constitutive fabric of society, and media are the means through which this communication is constituted (Peters, 1999; 2015) then such an atomized view can only give us a one-sided perspective, especially if we do not consider how the institutions and organizations of everyday life play a role in restricting or enabling access to certain media (Beattie & Cassidy, 2021; Guyard & Kaun, 2018). I develop this point further in my discussion section.

Aside from being individualized and responsibilised, the disconnecting agent is also usually relatively young. This is seemingly an unavoidable effect of recruiting from the nearest
student body when seeking to set up a study in disconnective practices. While this focus on students of higher education institutions can go some way to explaining the high degree of interest in disconnecting from “frivolous” social media or “addictive” smartphones, it also fosters some blind spots. Students tend not to be highly tied down by family-related or professional engagements as older cohorts, a fact which is explicitly noted by some scholars as giving purpose to their sampling (e.g. Kim et al., 2017). Hence, we seem to know comparatively little about how such duties might affect a wish for disconnection (although see Alvarez, this volume).

Another pitfall in this focus on younger people as disconnecting agents is that it risks reproducing unhelpful ideas of “digitally native” and “digitally non-native” populations along a continuum of age. In other words, researchers might then alternately think of youngsters as too connected (and therefore in need of a detox) and older adults as not nearly connected enough. Fortunately, a subsection of studies (4%) does consider digital non-use for older adults as a meaningful choice, rather than an explicit lack.

While students are by far the most studied subsection of society, specific professions have also been studied as disconnectors. Knowledge workers, who are usually understood as being highly entangled with digital media, have been the subject of a few studies. Relatedly, workers in creative media or media-related professions have also been studied specifically as disconnectors. This includes relatively precarious workers such as photographers, journalists, academics and even influencers. This is congruent with findings that people in possession of high amounts of cultural (as opposed to economic) capital being more likely to engage in digital disconnection practices (Fast et al., 2021). However, we should keep in mind that precarity and its entwinement with (self-)tracking technologies reach far beyond these particular job titles (see e.g., Moore, 2018).

In broad strokes, we thus know something about the disconnection wishes of people whose labour is creative, media-based, precarious or some combination of the preceding. Among the most precarious we even know a little about the important role that restrictive media practices play for marginalized sex workers (Chib et al., 2021). By contrast, we know very little specifically about the disconnection practices of people who may be high in political or economic capital (although see Fast and Enli, this volume). There is thus an opportunity for disconnection studies to seek studying “upwards” rather than “across” or “down” (see Nader, 1969).

Organized structures of disconnection such as the above-mentioned retreats or holidays frequently occur, but these are by their very nature exceptions from everyday life. When communities for more permanent disconnection appear, they are often religious in nature and sequestered from broader society (e.g. Shahar, 2017). The precise connection between religiosity and disconnection is beyond the scope of this present inquiry, though I will highlight that even
ostensibly non-religious digital detox retreats have been analysed as seeking a “reenchantment” of non-digital life (Sutton, 2020).

While businesses and formal organizations may drop the use of certain external communication channels, we know very little about any studies of organizations rejecting means of internal communication. I will return to this gap in the discussion section.

Within the domain of the political, a handful of studies discuss left-wing digital movements considering the ethics of using tech platforms (e.g., Andersson, 2017). This is not unsurprising given the anti-capitalist critique adjacent to much of tech criticism. Without wishing to draw any false equivalences, I will note that this left-wing goal of disconnection contrasts with digitally enabled extreme right-wing movements, who are usually studied as having disconnection done unto them (Rogers, 2020).

Some thus-far novel approaches have also seen contexts such as prisons, concerts, and sports venues as sites of digital disconnection (Bennett, 2017; Hutchins, 2016; Kaun, 2021). Obviously, we may question the role that covert and overt coercion plays in these contexts (prisons as well as concerts). Nonetheless they are an attempt at looking at more relatively “ordinary” venues as facilitating digital disconnection. 7 The reasons for the (im)possibility of disconnecting are thus at least not mere placed within the contents or design of the media themselves.

Discussion: Being Open to Further Disconnections

If the study of disconnection is to avoid implicitly reproducing the responsibilising tenets of the popular discourse on disconnection and responsible media use (Enli & Syvertsen, 2021; Gregg, 2018), then there needs to be a greater awareness of the social contexts which aid or hinder disconnection. The present moment of ubiquitous connectivity is not just due to the prevalence of social media as an isolated facet of society, but due to the way in which all everyday domains of life have become entangled with digital media. This goes for working life (Bagger, 2021; Gregg, 2011),

7 While sequestered religious communities have been studied as contexts of digital disconnection, as mentioned above, I encountered no empirical studies on houses of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques) as “everyday” sites of disconnection.
parenting (Beckmann & Mazmanian, 2020) and interactions with social and governmental institutions (Schou & Pors, 2019). Living a functioning and fulfilling life without a Facebook or Instagram account may be possible and is often encouraged, but we are less encouraged – and arguably less able - to live without an e-mail account. Disconnectors may skip the smartphone in favour of a dumbphone, but only rarely forego having a phone entirely.

Future studies on disconnection might fruitfully consider that not only the media per se but also the social structures within which these media exist may be the cause of both the potentially overwhelming experiences of connectivity as well as the hinderers of disconnection (Guyard & Kaun, 2018). While I maintain that government internet shutdowns or platform closures are not at the core of disconnection studies (e.g., Rohman & Ang, 2021), we should keep in mind that most of us live in societies permeated by organizations and institutions (Perrow, 1991), and that these in part constrain or enable people’s abilities to disconnect.

To exemplify with a prominent domain of life which disconnection studies have only sparingly touched upon, I look at working life. This is perhaps one of the contexts where individual agency is the most restrained (Anderson, 2017), and where digital technologies play a huge role (Gregg, 2011; Plesner and Husted, 2020). Fast (2021) points out that studies of working life “seem more inclined to use connectivity rather than dis-connectivity as a point of entry” (p. 1616). Hence, “disconnection” in the study of professional organizations usually denotes a gap to be bridged, rather than a considered resistance (Munro, 1997). Interestingly, disconnection scholars have noted the propensity for knowledge workers, who are particularly prone to working primarily with digital media, to feel overwhelmed by their own media use (Syvertsen, 2020). Thus far, most of the interventions offered have been in terms of restrictions, such as the “right to disconnect” legislations which bans off-hours messaging. Less attention has been paid to the potential for workplaces as institutions which can refuse the use of certain types of media, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. Fast, 2021; Guyard & Kaun, 2018). Between the macro level of government interventions and the micro level of individualized resistance, we should be curious about a meso-level organization or firm as a disconnecting agent, or as a structure for individual agents with potentially conflicting ideas about digital disconnection and the desirability of such disconnection (Anderson, 2017; Guyard & Kaun, 2018).

In terms of the methods of digital disconnection, we should still be curious about the potentials for deliberate media refusals (Portwood-Stacer, 2013) to make an impact. Though formal organizations may play a role here, even less formal organized user exoduses have shown some efficacy. While researchers repeatedly highlight the futility in resisting Facebook, we hear less about the death or stagnation of digital platforms due to a loss of critical user mass, although there is
admittedly a growing research interest in such matters (e.g. Corry, 2021; McCammon & Lingel, 2022). Similarly, we should pay attention to which much-hyped digital media may pre-emptively amount to nothing, due to a persistent mass of user resistance, or which media disappear from common usage after only a limited time in the spotlight. Of course, we should contextualize such popular rejections of media in in terms of whether or not other media take their place (Edwards & Boellstorff, 2020).

Previous scholars have emphasized how the technical underpinnings of digital media make actual disconnection close to impossible. Account deletion and death may not save us from Facebook (Karppi, 2018). Even if we never had an account with a particular medium, data traces may still connect us through our friends who do (Bucher, 2020) and all domains of life are on the way to becoming subjects of both digitization and datafication (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). However, I argue that this should not foreclose the opportunity to ask where existing attempts at disconnection may be found.

Maybe resistance is futile (Lomborg, 2020), as the cybernetic, hive-minded, and colonizing Borg from Star Trek and many scholars would have it. But we should be curious whether this futility extends further than we may suspect, and whether it may have additional causes we have thus far not considered. Additionally, we should still ask whether resistance is useless, as the artless and bureaucratic Vogons from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (Adams, 1981) would have it. Here, I argue that disconnection studies should be open to both the material achievability of disconnection, particularly in non-individual constellations, as well the meaningfulness of disconnection to both individuals and collectives. Insofar as there is a digital backlash going on, then digital disconnection studies are a prime venue for making sense of it, and I argue that this emerging field has far from reached its full potential.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided the thus-far most comprehensive overview of empirical studies produced within the broader wake of the “disconnection turn” (Fast, 2021) and under the ethos of openness to the meaningfulness of digital disconnection (Bucher, 2020; Syvertsen, 2020). In doing so, I have both drawn the map of the field of disconnection studies more exhaustively than anyone else has thus far. At the same time, I argue that there is still much room for meaningful expansion into new venues of empirical research. The futility of digital disconnection may be both more deep-
set or more surmountable than has been previously proclaimed, depending on where we choose to look. For now, the present state of research leaves this as an open question.

The story of digital disconnection may begin with ambivalences towards social media, but we should not let it end there. Instead, the open interest in disconnection could fruitfully extend to all the aspects of life in which media may play a role. We should bear this openness in mind whenever new media appear on the scene. Furthermore, we should be curious about which social contexts and structures media are already embedded in, and which might aid or constrain disconnective possibilities.

Funding Acknowledgement

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References (Article II)


Article III
Professional, Transmedia Selves: Finding a Place for Enterprise Social Media

Abstract

Proceeding from an expanded view of transmedia theory, this chapter argues how enterprise social media (ESM) present an opportunity for digital self-presentation. The argument is ordinary users are now cast in the role of transmedia producers, who must figure out what unique contribution ESM can provide. The chapter then proceeds to outline three individual case studies of how integration of the ESM Workplace from Facebook may unfold. The cases illustrate how considerations of both self-promotion, citizenship in the workplace or using the playful functionalities of ESM may both encourage use and ultimately marginalize the medium in worker’s personal transmedia ecology.
Introduction

Picking a profile picture, choosing which biographic information to fill out, which pictures to share and even with how we interact (likes, comments, messages) and with whom. These are all examples of how self-presentation may enter our considerations when we use social media. These dynamics and considerations are well-described when discussing the mixed audiences of public-facing social media (van Dijck 2013; Scolere et al 2018). What exactly the relationship between social media and working life is supposed to be has been a source of controversy for some time (Bagger 2021). In this chapter I will discuss how this is no less true when social media migrate clearly into the workplace in the form of enterprise social media (ESM) (Leonardi et al 2013). I discuss this both via the existing research, and by providing three examples of how workers chose to tackle self-representation on ESM.

The argument of this chapter is that enterprise social media (ESM) represent a new arena in which people’s self-presentation must be communicatively negotiated. This negotiation needs to consider three major factors, namely (1) the goals of individual employee, (2) the social context, and norms of the organization, as well as (3) the medium itself and its similarity to “personal” social media. ESMs, which include platforms such as Slack, Microsoft Yammer and Workplace from Facebook, imitate the look and functionalities of the more commonly used social media such as Facebook (Leonardi et al 2013: 2). I argue that a view from the extended field of transmedia theory (Fast & Jansson 2019) can help us make sense of how people integrate these platforms into their everyday lives. Previous applications of transmedia theory to professional contexts have paid attention to specific, media-driven occupations such as journalism (Gambarato & Tárcia 2017), celebrity (Gmiterková 2018) or media management (Rohn & Ibrus 2018). Working life in general is rarely considered, despite the proliferation of digital media technologies herein (Gregg, 2011), and the potentially transmedial nature of current working life (Fast & Jansson 2019). Specifically looking at ESMs affords us an opportunity to understand everyday people as conscious transmedia producers. Just like the oft-discussed institutional transmedia producers in the entertainment industry, they must navigate and negotiate the usefulness of different media for different purposes (Jenkins 2008; Dena 2009). In this way, all professionals may indeed become transmedia professionals, whether they want to or not.

After a brief overview of some of the many ways in which social media in general have posed a problem to the maintenance and construction of identity, I move on to specifically discuss enterprise social media. While ESMs on paper pose a solution to many of the problems associated with identity construction on social media, I contend that their purpose can still be quite uncertain to
the end user. I highlight this through three case studies of users of the ESM Workplace from Facebook, a medium developed by the makers of the more well-known Facebook platform. Inspired by heuristics from previous studies in people’s self-communication with and across media (Lomborg and Frandsen 2016; Scolere et al 2018), I present three case studies of how self-presentation on enterprise social media may be guided either by (1) the wish to control and construct one’s own self-conception, (2) the wish to conform to the social world of the organization or (3) the wish to exploit the playful, social affordances of the ESM platform Workplace from Facebook insofar as they are similar to that of the regular Facebook platform. Proceeding along each of these axes may at first lead to an integration of the ESM into everyday life and self-presentation. However, as each case will demonstrate, going too far along any of them may also lead to the ESM itself becoming superfluous.

**Background**

**Identity, Social Media and Transmedia**

I argue that this is a conundrum which can be illuminated through the perspective of transmedia theory, insofar as it represents an opportunity for individuals to respond to the challenge of using media for appropriate and specified purposes (Helles 2013; Lomborg 2014). As I argue, this is analogous to the transmedia producers’ challenge of having each text across media making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole (Jenkins 2008). For my present purposes, the “whole” is not some unified concept of identity of the self. Rather, just as is the case for fictional transmedia characters, the fact that a person is present across multiple media does not necessarily imply that these diffused media make up a coherent, univocal whole (Bertetti 2014).

To illuminate this, I build on an expanded understanding of transmedia studies which presumes a that we are in the middle of a process of “transmediatization” (Jansson 2013). This is to be understood as a societal shift where media are decreasing in their role as mass communication “gathering places” and increasingly rely upon the authorship and participation of those previously called the “audience” (Jansson 2013: 287-8). This process then becomes a mundane fact of everyday (working) life rather than something which is confined to specific topics or subcultures (Fast & Jansson 2019; Janson & Fast 2018). In other words, digital identity and self-presentation cannot be understood as something which is singular, but rather negotiated and situational. This will become especially pertinent in the domain of the professional, which is both a source of great meaning in the lives of people (Gregg 2011), as well as a domain filled with restrictions and structures (Anderson
2017). Accordingly, it is a domain in which individuals must constantly negotiate the construction of their own identities (Nippert-Eng 2008).

Regarding identity construction, Jansson and Fast (2018) note that previous transmedia studies have emphasized identity as (1) unfolding in relation to transmedia texts, (2) as being unitary and (3) something which is only perceivable through obvious expressions (2018: 341). In contrast, they argue that in the current media environment “Managing transmedia per se becomes an element of identity work” (2018: 346). This is congruent with existing communications scholarship which emphasizes that users are now left with the tasks of choosing among a plethora of media to manage their everyday (Helles 2013) and are engaged in a constant, ongoing process of negotiating what is appropriate behaviour on and with these media (Lomborg 2014). In this way, today's professionals (and media users in general) are now faced with the dilemma which was previously discussed as the purview of transmedia producers: Finding out how to use different media for dissemination of content which is not only valuable on its own (Jenkins 2008: 97), but also aimed at different, specific audiences (Dena 2009: 237).

The problem of self-presentation to different audiences is perhaps nowhere more prominent than in the study of social media. A social media presence is something to be “worked on” and perfected constantly (Perkel 2006). This is especially pertinent in discussions of maintaining a professional public appearance across media (Jacobson & Gruzd 2020; Scolere et al 2018) in the context of the “real-name web” (Hogan 2013).

Confounding matters further, the spokespeople of social media platforms themselves also disagree about the proper approaches to identity construction on their media. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been quoted as saying with regards to the proliferation of his own platform that “[t]he days of you having a different image for your work friends or co-workers and for the other people you know are probably coming to an end pretty quickly” (quoted in Kirkpatrick 2010: 199). In contrast, LinkedIn CEO insisted that “Facebook is largely a social utility platform. LinkedIn is a professional network.... The key distinction is that as a professional you want people to want to know who you are ” (quoted in van Dijck 2013: 207). If the people behind these media disagree about where and how the professional self should be disseminated, then it should be no surprise that users might be as well.

Considering this, people have developed several strategies to cope with maintaining the boundaries between work and other domains of life (Ollier-Malaterre & Rothbard 2015). For instance, people may self-censor posts (Sleeper et al 2013), make profiles private or non-searchable (Tufecki 2008) or create multiple profiles on the same site or use several sites entirely for different
purposes and audiences (Kang & Wei 2020) All of this is in aid of maintaining boundaries and preventing the so-called “context collapse” (Marwick & boyd 2011).

Enterprise Social Media and the Professional Self

During the last decade or so, a new type of business media has been on the rise. These types of software are variously referred to as “internal social media” (Men et al. 2020), “organizational social media” (Van Orsch & Coursaris 2013) or (in my preferred nomenclature) “enterprise social media” (Leonardi et al. 2013). What they have in common is the distinguishing feature of being bounded off to only include members attached to a specific organization. Enterprise social media differs from the conventional intranet in their affordance for many-to-many style communication (cf. Jensen 2010), as opposed to the one-to-many, top-down style of communication often characteristic of traditional intranets (cf. Heide 2015). Ordinary people are now tasked with using specific media for specific purposes and audiences. They urged into authorship of not only organizational communication (Grudin 2006; McAfee 2009) but also of their strategic self-presentation (Leonardi & Treem 2012).

Thus far, there seems to have been little research on how professional social media are integrated into people’s transmedia lives. This necessitates a view of how these media are viewed and used by workers, rather than the usual focus on what these media might do for a company (Treem 2015). I argue that enterprise social media - and Workplace from Facebook in particular - present a new challenge for people’s transmedia identity work. Firstly, this is because they are situated within the structuring context on an organization, where rules are often formalized and power inequities between people often both explicit and taken-for-granted (Anderson 2017). At the same time as they are situated within this formalized system, ESMs are still designed to afford the “personal, but not private” informal communication characterized by more public social media (Lomborg 2014).

On paper, the ESM presents a protection to the threats of context collapse by engaging in a known audience. This is because the audience is known insofar as that it is restrained to the context of work. However, given the affordance for this many-to-many communication, this can be broadly said to both empower and constraint the ability of the individual to freely express themselves, as they are now required to navigate a new communicative arena. In practice, this can lead to highly varied results. As these systems are usually voluntary, at least on paper, usage may often be low and sporadic, with many workers abstaining from use (Giermindl et al 2017; Treem 2015). As we will see in the following analysis, even dedicated usage may lead to rendering the ESM superfluous or marginal, thus reducing its integration into a personal, transmedia ecology.
Data Collection

The three specific choices of self-presentation discussed in this article are chosen as exemplary cases from a larger pool of 21 interviewees. These three specific respondents are chosen as they best exemplify three distinct, approaches to presenting the “professional self” on the ESM Workplace, namely along the three axes of self, social world, and social media system.

The original pool of 21 cases were sampled to attain a maximal variance in types of organizational type (varied on both size and industry). The organisations ranged in size from about 20 members to about 12,000 overall, and the industries ranged across non-government organisations, design bureau, health and fitness, media and publishing, medical and technical services, information technology, construction, and consumer retail. My choice of respondents is neither unusually precarious nor highly privileged power users, as opposed to recent related studies of transmedia work (e.g., Fast & Jansson 2019).

I interviewed with the purpose of mapping their participation across several ordinary social media platforms (including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram) and finally Workplace from Facebook. As a documentation of their practices with the ESM, I would ask them to walk me through their recent activities on the platform. The interview would then end on them reflecting on the patterns of their own usage as they recalled them, including what they saw as appropriate or desirable behaviour. These reflections – along with a reading aloud of the content - would then be included in the final transcriptions. In this way, the interview was meant to elicit not only a recollection of their activities, but also a reflection of what factors structured their behaviour, and what aims they had with their patterns of action.

Analysis

Three Strategies of Integrating Enterprise Social Media

In the following, I highlight three case studies of people who have tried to answer the question of “what am I supposed to do with enterprise social media” differently. It will become obvious that their respective responses are curtailed by their circumstances. Most notably, this involves their
respective (upper and lower case) workplaces. However, I argue that each of their responses are shaped by their expectations of ESM Workplace and its similarities to the personal Facebook platform.

They react to this similarity along three different heuristic lines which I borrow from studies communicative interactions with apps and social media by Lomborg & Frandsen (2016) and Scolere et al (2018). Either they let their response be guided by their (1) selves, by (2) the system and its similarity to other known systems, or by the (3) social world, which most obviously entails their workplaces, but might also extend to their broader professional and personal networks. While all three cases displayed concerns along all three logics, I demonstrate than one of these logics are dominant in each of the given cases.

My first case, Isak (self-directed), will show a person who chooses to deal with the ambiguity of ESMs by cross-posting to both LinkedIn and Workplace. In this way, I argue that Isak represents a “mostly professional” use of Workplace which is particularly career-conscious. My second case, Oliver (social world-directed), will discuss how Workplace can be used in a way which exemplifies citizenship in his organization through his actions. The aim for Oliver is to use the platform to socialise and orient himself, contributing on occasion, but being very mindful of never transgressing any professional norms. My third case, that of Louise (System-directed), shows how Workplace can, quite contrary to its stated purposes, completely morph into being a less-than-serious platform. In this, I argue that her purposes for using Workplace can be summarized as an attempt to achieve conviviality in her small organization. They all provide different attempts, along different axes, of how to integrate enterprise social media into a person’s life. However, as we shall see, proceeding along these axes may also lead to the medium being made superfluous, or otherwise be rejected.

Case #1: Self-directed usage and Career-Consciousness

Lomborg & Frandsen (2016) mainly develop their ideas of digitally “communicating with the self” with reference to self-tracking apps, where users can constantly gain new insights, document their achievements, and compare themselves to their past selves. However, self-documentation is also a central aspect of social media (Mortensen & Lomborg 2019; Scolere et al 2016), and of keeping track of one’s own professional accomplishments. I therefore wish to discuss a respondent who has turned primarily towards this type of usage of the ESM Workplace from Facebook.

Isak, our first case study, works in a project leadership position in a large Danish construction enterprise. The individual projects he leads often last upwards of several years in total,
and even longer if negotiations drag on. During these periods, he will in his daily tasks deal with builders, office workers and administrative personnel from both his own organization, and the organizations for whom he is doing construction. His days are filled back-to-back with meetings. In the peaks periods of the project work, Isak’s days may start as early as seven in the morning and end as late as eleven in the evening, not counting the time before he gets to work and may check e-mails (frequently) or (more rarely) return a phone call from a partner or subsidiary.

Isak tries, on occasion, to photo document his day-to-day on Workplace if he finds something particularly interesting going on. These photos have two usual outputs: his Workplace profile and his LinkedIn profile. Usually with highly similar texts attached, depending on the audience at hand. Isak says he is highly aware that a lot of the industry-specific terminology might not yield the intended engagement on LinkedIn, whereas this is less of a concern on Workplace, where everyone is in the same business as him.

On Workplace, his posts often yield reactions and comments from the national officers and international chief executives of his organization. Isak expresses a great degree of satisfaction with this, insofar as he appreciates the recognition from his superiors. In a recent case, Isak documented the entire process of construction of a large complex - from the first shovel to the ribbon-cutting - as an album on Workplace, eliciting many reactions. Isak also here engages in a very explicit documentation of his work. The documentation then appears in a form with which others can interact. This feeds into the affordance of visibility offered by ESM (Treem & Leonardi 2013), and the visibility of connections. This allows Isak to both know for himself and display to others his connection to the executive branches his firm.

Isak’s usage pattern is aimed towards a highly professional self-presentation, and always with at least two “imagined” audiences in mind: His internal (and mostly known) audience and his broader network (of both known and unknown persons). Since the latter is of course not available to him through Workplace, this leads him to shape his posts so that they can, with relatively little tweaking, speak to both audiences. In this way, he has appropriated two media platforms - LinkedIn and Workplace - to serve complimentary purposes in his everyday media repertoire.

Isak is a representation of the fact that the usual affordances of self-presentation on enterprise social media, particularly visibility and a public display of connections are useful, but not sufficient. Rather he wishes the effort displayed in his self-presentation to be at its most fruitful and reach the widest possible audience. As the professional self-presentation afforded by a platform such as Workplace is easily transferrable to other, professional contexts, in this case LinkedIn, this presents an interesting contrast to previous examples of having to more selectively self-present across certain media (cf. Van Dijck 2013). In this way, Isak ironically renders Workplace as marginal
in his own media ecology, insofar as LinkedIn becomes the place where reaches most of his intended audience, even part of the audience he might seek out on Workplace.

Isak provides an example of a self-presentation which needs to be tailored to a diverse audience both within and without his organization and wished to be visible and excel. The next case will describe a person who tailors their professional self-presentation exclusively to be internal to the organization and wishing to conform.

Case #2: Social World-directed usage and Citizenship in the Organization

It seems almost tautological to point out that social media are, indeed, social. They allow us to feel a sense of communion with others, in which we constantly negotiate or reaffirm norms of communication (Lomborg 2014). Knowing and reaffirming these norms may arguably be even more vital in a professional context, where people may self-censor or otherwise curb their expressions out of a fear of social and professional repercussions (Madsen & Verhoeven 2016).

Oliver, my second case, works with the implementation of IT solutions in a large multinational firm with more than five thousand employees. Even though Oliver’s tasks are managed to a wide-variety of other (usually Microsoft-based) pieces of software, his organization has also implemented Workplace. When I first meet him, Oliver is an active user of Workplace, and often shares, comments, and likes upon the posts of his colleagues.

When he posts it is usually in groups where he either knows everyone or is highly confident about which audience he is reaching. His work involves a high deal of travelling and helping implementations and launches in different countries, as well as a fair amount of conference and networking activities. This often occurs in teams, and Oliver and his team often document this with selfies or group photos shared on Workplace groups where they deem the audience to be relevant.

There is also room for more informal photographs and posts, especially when celebratory dinners with his team occurs, usually when visiting foreign cities. Oliver describes a close relationship with his immediate colleagues, and a great deal of enjoyment about these outings. It is not uncommon for these outings to become rather festive, resulting in a quite informal mood, and the occasional alcohol-induced embarrassments. At this, point, Oliver describes, someone usually makes sure that everyone puts down their phones and makes sure that everyone had heard a refrain of “No workplace [for this]”.

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In other words: At some point, even in a gathering exclusively among colleagues which has been continually documented for sharing on Workplace, there is a danger of transgressing the communicative norms of the internal platform. The colleagues then find themselves in a situation where the boundaries of professional courtesy in sharing must be explicitly reinstated.

I present Oliver’s practices here as an example of a dutiful user of the ESM who exemplifies many of the assumed ideal traits of an ESM user: He tailors content to the internal audience of the organization at large and to his closer group. His presence and self-presentation strike a balance between the convivial and the professional, walking the tightrope to distinguish what types of communication and self-presentation is appropriate. In this way, his usage and self-presentation is broadly aligned with what might be termed “organizational citizenship” (Organ 1997). Here organizational “citizens” (employees, workers) are expected to be dutiful and communicative members within the context of the organization.

However, citizenship may only take one so far in one’s enthusiasm for an ESM. When I catch up with Oliver in a follow-up interview a year later, he is quick to try and convince me that he has not made much use of Workplace since our last encounter. I attribute this in part to the fact that he felt no need to stand out on the platform, and certainly didn’t consider it an essential work task. Thus, he had slipped out of the habit of contributing and checking in, and the ESM had been rendered marginal in his own media ecology.

Case #3: System-directed usage and Conviviality

On social media, our communicative traces and actions are not only viewed by other users, but also absorbed and analysed by the system itself, before occasionally being fed back to us. In this sense, using social media is “speaking into [a] system” (Jensen & Helles 2017). This system may then both explicitly “talk back” at in the forms of messages, prompts and suggestions. In a more indirect sense, our expectations of the system are also shaped by interactions with previous, similar systems. In the case of Workplace from Facebook, the obvious point of comparison in peoples previous experience with the public Facebook platform.

The final case is that of Louise. Louise works in a small NGO of around twenty people. The team is a mixture of volunteers, interns and full-time employees and they occupy a very narrow age range, with the oldest in their early thirties. The members of the organisation are almost all mutual Facebook friends, share lunch most days and often leave for drinks after works. The latter of this is often arranged through threads on Facebook Messenger, or simply by text message. That is, if
everyone isn’t just in the office around closing time, in which case all of this just happens more
spontaneously and without the need to pull out a phone or open a messaging thread on a computer.

As an NGO Louise’s organization gets free access to Workplace, and one of her colleagues
chose to take advantage of this opportunity and install it. However, due to the informal nature and
work environment at the organization, Workplace sees little use. The organization makes concerted
efforts to post their Monday morning meeting notes on the platform for storage. Aside from, most
of the posting that appears on the organization’s Workplace is in a dedicated “meme exchange”
group. Louise is a frequent contributor in this group, where the level of seriousness is quite low.

I home in on Louise and the Workplace of her organization because I believe that they
representing and interesting edge case. This instance of the Workplace platform is virtually devoid of
content which is, for instance, self-congratulatory, or even congratulatory of the team or their
achievements. The reason for this, she believes, is simple: There is no-one on there for the benefit
of whom it would make sense to engage in this kind of performance.
Instead, the only active forum is one where the content is decidedly unserious. In this way, this
instance of Workplace has more in common with informal, humorous link-sharing services or the
earlier days of the regular Facebook platform.

I emphasize this because it is not exactly a stated goal of ESMs that such modes of use
occur. I argue that this is all possible, in Louise’s case due to the small size and intimate culture of
her organization. In some sense, the enterprise social medium is almost superfluous, which I argue
allows for the use that she and her small NGO evidence here. Since the affordances of the ESM do
not – to her and her teammates - present much obvious advantage in terms of the usually stated
goals of knowledge sharing (memes excluded) or de-hierarchization, it became a medium of pure
sociability. As sociability was ultimately a purpose which was served by plenty of other channels in
the small NGO, this ultimately resulted in them leaving the ESM by the wayside.

Directions for Future Research

This chapter’s study has purposefully focused on workers who were not particularly affected by
structural inequalities and insecurities with regards to the job market. This leaves open a range of
questions for other factors about people’s identity per se which may influence transmedia self-
presentation. As established in previous research, the much-desired ”authenticity” via social media
can be especially problematic to foster for people in marginalized positions (Furr et al 2016;
Haimson & Hoffman 2016), and can in the end lead to the forced construction of a ”vanilla self”
(Pitean et al. 2016). I encourage future research to consider how communication of a professional self on ESM is also subject to such structuring factors.

As mentioned, the three lines of heuristics which I have emphasized in this chapter account for interactions along the lines of self-to-self, self-to-social world self-to-system. This leaves open the door for discussions of how enterprise social media are engaged in system-to-system interaction. Given the recent prevalence of discussions about how new economies of data extraction shape our everyday lives (Couldry & Mejias 2019; Zuboff 2019) then this is perspective which may be fruitfully considered. The fear regarding surveillance, tracking and loss of privacy due to the use of social media has been discussed heavily within the personal domain (Brown 2020; Draper & Turow 2019) but has only received scant attention within the professional domain (Treem 2015). I encourage future research to consider this aspect as well.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued how we can now see individuals in general, and professionals in particular as “transmedia producers”, especially with regard to their production of mediated “selves”. This is perhaps most apparent when it comes to identity construction and social media. Here, enterprise social media present themselves as a new medium to be incorporated into practices of self-presentation. As these cases have demonstrated, whether one proceeds with an eye primarily towards self-promotion, conforming to the social world of the organization or merely trying to lean on the systems similarity to known media, this is no guarantee of a successful integration into a personal, transmedia ecology. If we are to consider the current professional as an (unwitting) transmedia producer, they certainly have their work cut out for them.

References (Article III)


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Article IV

**Overcoming Forced Disconnection**

**Disentangling the Professional and the Personal in Pandemic Times**

**Introduction**

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and the subsequent lockdowns imposed by governments across the world, a major part of the workforce in the Global North was ordered to ‘work from home’. Consequently, the struggle between work and personal life was turned upside down, as was the public, normative framing of digital media. Just a few months earlier, digital media were largely blamed for creating work/life balance problems for white-collar workers. However, the lockdown meant that this was no longer a matter of an ‘overflow’ (Bailyn 1988) or a ‘spillover’ (Berkowsky 2013) of work into ‘life’—but rather a complete relocation of ‘work’ into the domain of the personal. Now these media were able to offer a ready-made solution for making this transition work and for facilitating the coordination of work tasks and daily social contact that many people missed. Even before the lockdown, digital technologies played a dual role in both structuring everyday life and making people available across all their different life roles and domains (Beckman and Mazmanian 2020). However, with the lockdown, the semi-stable situation whereby activities and expectations more or less fell into specific contexts of ‘home’ or ‘work’ (Nippert-Eng 1996) came under pressure. As a result, individuals and households were faced with the challenge of creating and re-organizing day-to-day routines on a micro-scale, with these routines relying more than ever on digital media to continue functioning.
The pandemic informs two areas that were already of interest to media studies and turns them upside down: the first is that of ‘digital disconnection’ literature, which often frames disconnection from digital communication as both voluntary and beneficial (Syvertsen 2017) and which is often cast as a pushback on the encroachment of digital media in everyday life. The second area covers studies looking into remote working, which has found that the ability to work outside the traditional office can be conducive to inclusivity, productivity and even personal well-being (Anderson, Kaplan and Vega 2015). Rather than constituting a conscious disconnection from specific technologies (Karppi 2018), or emphasizing a turn to face-to-face interaction (Turkle 2015), the lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic represented a disconnection from co-present interpersonal communication. Now mediated communication was the only available option outside the immediate household. We argue that this is best understood as a type of forced disconnection. The response to this disconnection was an intensified connection to and through digital technologies in order to make things work. However, overcoming this forced disconnection has had the effect of pulling us all deeper into the rabbit hole of an ideology of connectivity and optimization of self, work, and life (Kristensen and Banke 2019; Moore 2018). Connection and disconnection are not merely opposites, but deeply entangled (Kaun and Schwarzenegger 2014). Indeed, the forced disconnection experienced during the pandemic, ironically, would not have been possible without a prior reliance on digital communication infrastructures through which people were subsequently forced, or at least strongly urged, to connect. In this chapter, we unpack the notion of forced disconnection, exploring its key characteristics and experiential qualities in the specific context of the pandemic lockdown through examples drawn from a small interview study with knowledge workers employed in companies using the enterprise social medium Workplace from Facebook. We argue that the primary difficulty of forced disconnection in this particular situation lies in establishing temporal, spatial, and contextual boundaries between the different domains of everyday life once digital communication becomes the default mode of connection to the outside world.

Approach and Methodology

To empirically illustrate how the forced disconnection of the pandemic lockdowns necessitates a reliance on communication media, we draw on examples collected as part of a broader empirical study into the role of so-called Enterprise Social Media (ESM) (Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield 2013) in changing boundaries between the domains of ‘home’ and ‘work’, leading to a blurring of professional and personal modes of communication. More specifically, this study evolved around Workplace from Facebook, a product that has so far received little public attention, while Facebook
itself is perhaps the most popular social media platform to disconnect from (Baym, Wagman, and Persaud 2020; Karppi 2018). Workplace from Facebook is a social media platform aimed at enabling people to connect and collaborate at work. The platform was launched in 2016, and mimics the design and functionality of the public Facebook platform. The study, conducted by the first author, was done in Denmark, a Nordic welfare state with a highly advanced digital infrastructure and near-total penetration of internet connectivity among the population (Flensburg and Lai 2020).

The primary data material for this chapter comes from nine purposively sampled qualitative interviews carried out by the first author. Interviewees were young Danish so-called knowledge workers affected by the pandemic lockdown, all recruited via network sampling. Ages of the interviewees ranged between 18 and 36. Eight were Danes living and working in the greater Copenhagen area, with one English person residing in the UK. Interviews were conducted between March and July of 2020 and focused on what role communication media play in how the interviewees’ structured and shaped a ‘new normal’ everyday life.

In these conversation-style interviews, we asked the respondents to reflect on how the lockdown had changed the nature of their communication with colleagues and business connections, probing specifically into the use of Workplace, but also paying attention to how other media had taken on new functionalities. We also asked our respondents to imagine if anything they might have learned about themselves and their working habits and routines during lockdown might continue even after restrictions are eased, in an attempt to outline how they might imagine their future working life. Sometimes the conversation moved on naturally to how they now maintained contact with their friends and family, and we allowed the interviews to develop naturally and organically, recognizing that the interview itself played a part in reconnecting to a social world beyond the home. Aside from these interviews, we drew on published material and webinars co-produced by Workplace, designed to give tips on best practice during the pandemic. These led us to observe how Facebook tried to position their ESM as a primary communication tool for both collaboration and sociability at work during the pandemic and ensuing lockdown.

It should be noted that of course not all professional lives were affected equally by the outbreak of the pandemic. In the bigger picture, having to work from home can be seen as a luxury problem: around the globe, people have lost their jobs and businesses or been forced to the work on the frontline of the pandemic with an associated higher risk of exposure to Covid-19. The latter category includes drivers, medical staff, caregivers, and other employees critical to society continuing to function. As argued by some scholars, we should be careful not to universalize experiences of the crisis (Milan and Tréré 2020; Karppi 2021, xiii), nor should we assume that struggles of disconnection as such are the same everywhere (Natale and Tréré 2020). The empirical
analyses in this chapter thus reflect the struggles of home and work from the point of view of generally privileged knowledge workers in a welfare state.

We were interested in our present sample for both ethical and practical reasons. The ethical reasons included not wanting to place an additional burden on people with familial care responsibilities exacerbated by the lockdown or on people in particularly precarious work situations who might be at risk of losing their livelihoods during the lockdown. For related reasons, we sought out people without familial carer responsibilities. This is a limitation of the study—one we shall return to in the discussion—but also a product of the challenge of doing research, ethically, in an unprecedented global emergency. The practical reasons include our interest in building on previous research aimed at understanding the knowledge worker as being particularly enmeshed in digital communication technologies, to the point that these blur the boundaries between work and other domains of life.

Researching younger (18–36) knowledge workers also offers a number of advantages. Not only is this a group which is often seen as being particularly engaged in their careers (Petersen 2020), but one which we also expected would be particularly hard hit by the loss of the workplace and colleagues as sources of sociability in everyday life. The lockdown might leave these people physically isolated, with at best housemates or domestic partners for company.

Hence, looking at their experiences may be particularly informative in the context of developing an understanding of ‘forced disconnection’. The data was analysed first through a process of open coding, which iteratively morphed into thematic coding (Bryman 2012). Within the coding process, special attention was paid to how our respondents described their new practices in the state of lockdown, and what hopes and dreams they expressed for their future work life practices. We compared our findings with the existing literature on digital disconnection and digital nomadism (discussed below) and paid special attention to how our respondents negotiated advantages and disadvantages of the lockdown, according to spatial, temporal, and contextual dimensions.

This process led us to develop the notion of ‘forced disconnection’, which was also partially inspired by the repercussions the pandemic had on shaping this research. Not only did it inspire us to carry out this particular sub-study rather than another kind of study, but also put into stark relief both our relationship to our respondents and our mutual relationship as researchers. In an immediate sense, our own homes were no longer places that were separate from our work (if they ever had been), nor did they constitute places where we were necessarily separate from our respondents. Just as the homes and work of our respondents were intertwined, so were our own ‘homes’ and the ‘fields’ we were working in now fused together via digital media (Kraemer 2016). Just as the people we interviewed talked to us remotely right out of their own homes, so did we.
And just as they had lost neutral ‘third places’ which might have proved essential for professional interactions, so had we (Hemer 2012). And just as they felt the realm of the professional now also consisted of a large amount of communication pertaining to the personal, so did we (Benmore 2016).

The Pandemic, The Professional Domain, and ’Perpetually On’ Media

The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown measures, which started in 2020 and are still ongoing as we put the finishing touches to this chapter, have brought with them many material, political, and social changes affecting a wide variety of contexts. Put simply, how far a person and their family were at risk from the virus, their life circumstances, and the physical context of the home now set the parameters for what is possible and desirable for them to achieve at work. The lockdown measures taken in March 2020 in Denmark—like in many other countries—including requiring all non-critical staff in the public sector and large parts of the private sector to work from home. Cafes, restaurants, fitness centres, and retail shops were closed, as were schools and childcare centres. Hence, while Danes were allowed to go outside and meet in small groups, most day-to-day life revolved around the home during the period the study investigated. In this new normal, individuals have to navigate around a number of issues including taking appropriate preventive measures—managing unexpected financial burdens; maintaining social contact with family and friends; handling anxieties related to the uncertainties of an unprecedented and unknown pandemic; home-schooling children—all the while transitioning work activities to the home sphere.

In the early phases of the pandemic ‘social distancing’ became the de facto moniker for a range of strategies which included limiting how many people you could meet up with face to face and minimizing out-of-home activities. These strategies went hand in hand with temporary shutdowns of public areas such as libraries, restaurants, and educational institutions, otherwise known as ‘lockdown measures’. Offices and other workplaces were also shut down with the justification that proper physical distancing and sanitization measures could not be implemented given the physical constraints.

As the WHO later stated, the term ‘physical distancing’ might have been a more precise description for these strategies, as the loss of social interaction per se was not the point (World Health Organization 2020), and researchers were quick to point out the dangers associated with neglecting the social aspects of life (Yip and Chau 2020). In fact, social interaction—and
communication—was still a crucial part of everyday life. This interaction was, however, heavily reliant on digital communication technologies (Kemp 2020).

In the context of this study, we consider the reconfigurations of communication in the wake of the pandemic lockdown to be a question of ‘boundary work’ (Nippert-Eng 1996). This term helps us understand how boundaries between different domains of life (usually ‘home’ and ‘work’) are constructed and maintained through spatial, temporal, psychological, and emotional means. Sometimes these means overlap, as in the case of the commute between home and work, which may be a temporal, spatial, and emotional passage. These boundaries can be subject to planned reconfigurations, such as the pursuit of more leisure via, for instance, tourism (Ferreira and Lampinen, this volume) or a complete reconfiguration of work and home life, an extreme example of which is digital nomadism (Woldoff and Litchfield 2021).

Being confined to the home during lockdown, coupled with the individual’s perpetual availability through ‘always-on’ digital technologies, led to a unique challenge to these boundaries, and perhaps particularly so for people we may term knowledge workers. These constitute a category of employees who—research has shown—are already heavily engaged with digital communication technologies which challenge the boundaries between home and work (e.g. Gregg 2011; Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates 2013).

**Forced Disconnection and Reconnection Through Digital Media**

For media and communication studies, as well as for general sociological research on boundary work, the unprecedented circumstances of a lockdown inform two ongoing discussions in the scholarly literature: ‘digital detoxing’ (Syvertsen and Enli 2020) and ‘digital nomadism’ (Woldoff and Litchfield 2021). These concepts present very different takes on the ‘always-on’ potential of digital communication technologies, and we explore them in the following section to help unpack what we term ‘forced (dis)connection’, as related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the ‘detox’ literature, disconnection from social media and digital technologies as such is seen as a way to more fruitfully engage or reconnect with one’s surroundings and oneself (Syvertsen and Enli 2020). What we may lose in disconnecting from digital technologies is regained by slowing down and being mindfully present in the here and now. Even temporary disconnection is seen as having advantages in terms of mindful engagement when we go back to our digital media again (Baym, Wagman, and Persaud 2020). However, while research has not always found this type
of disconnection to be unproblematic for the end user, it is usually the result of a voluntary choice (Jorge 2019; Portwood-Stacer 2013; Syvertsen 2017). The available media are, in a sense, perceived as the problem. We contend that problems of constant connectivity that people experience are not just related to the media in question, but more fundamentally concern the various and often conflicting demands that different aspects of everyday life impose on us (Gregg 2011). Work, leisure, housekeeping, political engagement, childcare, entertainment, health, socializing, and so on compete for our time and attention and create different structural conditions and expectations for each of us in our digitally tethered day-to-day lives (Beckman and Mazmanian 2020). Disconnection may, so to speak, serve as a strategy for redrawing boundaries around specific contexts in space and time as we go about our daily lives.

In the other body of literature, which is a loosely knit grouping of organizational and management studies, with elements from leisure and media studies, attempts at ‘remote working’ are often eyed with suspicion (Anderson, Kaplan, and Vega 2015); nonetheless, such attempts have found their ideal expression in terms such as the ‘digital nomad’. Such a nomadic work life is characterized by independence from any physical location, only tethering the workers to their workplace(s) through a laptop and a sufficiently reliable internet connection (Reichenberger 2018; Thompson 2019). This nomadic style of disconnection from physical locations has been shown to risk producing ‘workplace isolation’ among remote workers in particular (Hickman 2019). Indeed, people who engage in nomadic work stress their own need for a community or ‘tribe’ of like-minded individuals to which they can belong (Woldoff and Litchfield 2021). This shows us that social isolation is a risk even among people like the nomads who may be said to belong to the most aspirational and mobile class of workers (Polson 2020).

One group of digital platforms that have been developed to try and combat such problems of isolation are the so-called ESMs (Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield 2013), which allow employees to connect across space and time. These platforms claim to have a positive influence on the social side of work and information-sharing (Miller 2016; Treem and Leonardi 2012), as well as generally fostering a sense of community in the organization (Uysal 2016). In other words, these platforms seem ideally positioned to facilitate the type of social belonging often associated with professional domains which may be sorely lacking during a lockdown. Indeed, Workplace, the platform used by all the organizations our sample members were employed by, has been developed by the Facebook company, and deliberately mimics their other, more popular platform. This in and of itself also presents a possible source of tension, as Facebook is both among the most frequent targets of disconnection studies (Karppi 2018; Vaidhyanathan 2018), and at the same time is regarded as a common, everyday platform for mediated sociability (Lomborg 2014). Judging from
the many webinars available on using ESMs in general and more specifically for coordinating tasks and socializing at work during the pandemic, Facebook (and other platform providers) have seized the moment to brand and expand the reach of their ESM. Facebook, for example, argue that Workplace provides a vital source of connectivity and meaning in everyday life during a lockdown, thereby offering a technological solution to a forced disconnection from the physical encounters of normal co-located work life.

We use the notion of a forced disconnection as a media agnostic description for a situation where the individual’s habitual means of interacting and communicating with the surrounding world have been cut off. In other words, this is a spatial, temporal, and social disconnection that individuals must manage and make sense of. Crucially, this disconnection is not—at least not primarily—the result of aspirations and a deliberate effort on the part of the individual as research into media refusal or digital disconnection has found (Portwood-Stacer 2013; Hesselberth 2018). Neither is this disconnection usually the result of planned organizational policies nor of individual aspirations towards more autonomy, such as the extreme case of the digital nomad. In other words, the goals of optimizing individual well-being or increasing organizational flexibility are not, as they normally would be, the primary drivers of change. Instead, exigent circumstances, in this case a pandemic, have led to a situation where spatial, temporal and social routines have largely been suspended. This has had the potential to disrupt established orders of meaning and, in this particular case, has accelerated a dependence on digital communication platforms, now even more prominent in people’s home context. In this Corona virus situation, the forced disconnection also led to a forced connection to digital platforms from home. With opportunities for socializing and communicating co-presently currently at a minimum, this has resulted in greater reliance on digital technologies such as social media, video chat platforms and streaming services. This dependence on digital communication platforms to perform work tasks, while simultaneously juggling the increasing demands on personal lives, makes it imperative to investigate how to optimize the way we organize work, and perhaps how we organize our lives. We will discuss this further as we turn to our empirical findings in the next section.

Analysis

Life, Interrupted and Restarted

As already outlined, the Covid-19 lockdown measures led to a forced disconnection from the regular patterns of everyday life for our respondents. Chronologically, this was first evident in the
sudden changes that occurred in their everyday settings and locations at very short notice. For example: one 28-year-old woman travelled hundreds of miles in order to relocate to her parents’ home. A 28-year-old man was suddenly called home from the United States and had to figure out how to manage the lockdown situation together with two housebound housemates. Yet another man (30-years-old) had to navigate the new restrictions in the middle of moving in with his partner. In short, the pandemic represented a shift in people’s circumstances that happened almost overnight and which had far-reaching repercussions.

At the time we interviewed them, most of our respondents had settled into some routine involving a degree of new normality. The details varied from case to case, but in general they all described themselves as having established new routines, though they all expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their new everyday lives (aside from being frustrated with the pandemic per se).

In a tangible, physical sense, the Covid-19 lockdown measures meant that our respondents were physically disconnected from most of their extended networks. As we will demonstrate later in the analysis, the lockdown also forced a change in the usual temporal and social boundaries, with these social shifts being expressed in the reconfiguring of work-related communicative contexts. In order to ‘get some spare time—even though you’re working from home’ as one respondent pointedly put it, the people we talked to were largely left to their own devices. While working from home certainly had its advantages, it also involved missing out on a lot of scaffolding and structuring of work tasks, and this resulted in people experiencing problematic losses of boundaries (cf. Nippert-Eng 1996). In the following section, we investigate the loss of spatial, temporal, and social routines in turn to unpack the core experiential dimensions of forced disconnection. For each dimension, we examine to what extent the ESM Workplace was utilized in structuring these new boundaries and in structuring the forms and practices of connecting.

**Spatiality**

What all the people we talked to had in common was that the home had attained a new central position in their everyday life. While the home was never not important, it now became the physical site where most activities were carried out throughout the period of the lockdown—this was perhaps the most salient manifestation of how the lockdown blended professional and personal life. Everything now generally took place in the home. One respondent in particular described how he had difficulty maintaining the temporal boundaries between his work and home life for the first time ever in his career, since the dinner table in his shared apartment was now permanently occupied by his own and his housemates’ bulky work computers (man, 29, two housemates).
Reactions to the lack of variety in the physical surroundings were varied, but the general trend was to attempt some sort of boundary creation and management within the home. The early days of the pandemic might have seen our respondents working while ‘sitting with their porridge’ (man, 29, co-habiting), but this was now something they actively sought to avoid. In this, they all described how they introduced the norm of setting boundaries between the domains of the personal and the professional—even if this was difficult. The most extreme example of this was perhaps the respondent who was in the middle of a move during the lockdown (man, 30, co-habiting). He refurbished the old, empty apartment as a makeshift office, to which he commuted for work until the new owners received the keys. We can hardly think of a better illustration of how someone can value the spatial and temporal boundaries which a dedicated workspace provides.

The problem of resituating the domain of work into the home was exacerbated by the lack of ‘third places’ such as bars, restaurants, libraries, and cafes. All our respondents lamented the loss of these institutions. While third places are usually thought of as existing purely for social purposes (Oldenburg and Brisset 1982), they might also have served as alternative spaces for getting work done (Sayers 2009). Neither of these third-place functions were available to our respondents during the most restrictive periods of the lockdown, and they clearly missed them both.

Facebook’s Workplace, the ESM platform of particular interest in our interviews, was offered as a space for ambient intimacy—if not pure sociability—during the lockdown period. This was a behaviour which was actively encouraged, indeed heavily promoted, during lockdown by the makers of Workplace through their webinars and published materials. A specific practice that the Facebook ambassadors encouraged—with their own company as an example—was the creation of specific fora (groups) to share photos of home offices, ‘working from home meals’ (usually understood to be much ‘sadder’ than the office canteen) and pets. While this practice had been adopted by several of the companies our respondents were employed in (in one case modified to ‘show us your fridge’), none of our interlocutors had actively participated in sharing photos of their home offices (or fridges). Nonetheless, the fact that employees were encouraged to share personal photos, and so on highlights a point which we shall return to in the discussion—that of digital, work-related technologies being utilized in a domestic context, in this case by making the home available online (documenting and sharing it) in an ostensibly professional context. Here it might be worth considering that the connections created by digital platforms may not only be forced (though to some degree they certainly are), but may also be forged (Van Dijck 2012, 164). Following Van Dijck, we suggest that the affordances and normalized behaviours on specific social media platforms make those same platforms ‘not transmitters but rather producers of sociality’ (cf. Van Dijck 2013, 150, my emphasis).
Another factor which exacerbated the lack of spatial boundaries were the other people in the household, for example, housemates and parents. These cohabitees represented a difficulty that had to be navigated in order to ensure some degree of privacy. One respondent (man, 18, living with parents) described how his frequent video chats with close friends (in lieu of meeting up physically) were soured by him being all too aware that his parents were just one thin wall away. But the digital environment is always embedded in physical surroundings—and these sometimes make it very difficult to simulate a third place. In this way, work has not only invaded the space of the home and compromised the privacy that is usually expected in the home. ‘Home’ may in turn also be eroding the possibilities of recreating a third place. Thus, the social interactions often found in third places might have moved into the digital spaces, thus exemplifying forced connection to overcome the forced disconnection. Even so, the actual spatial surroundings—and the people and other domains which occupy it—are still ever-present. We shall return to this point in our discussion.

**Temporality**

The general conditions prevailing during the lockdown led to a different relation to time on a macro scale: ‘time flies’ as one respondent remarked as he confirmed he had been working from home for just over two months. The lockdown conditions also facilitated new ways of managing time on a more day-to-day basis. This manifested itself in ways our respondents found both positive and negative.

One respondent (woman, 27, co-habiting) found herself free to work on a personal schedule that she would have found impossible during the times when she was required to work in her usual office space. ‘What kind of slacker shows up at 11’ she imagines her co-workers saying if her new habits were to be adopted in the physical office. What she described is a way of reconnecting to her own ‘authentic’ routines and practices according to her own temporal rhythm. Being connected through digital devices (as opposed to being in the physical office space) allowed her to structure her day as she wished and avoid the judgement (as she perceived it) of her co-workers and peers. This is just one illustrative example of how digital technologies might play a positive role in structuring a better everyday life. This respondent had been freed from the normative temporal constraints of her surroundings. Not everyone was as fortunate.

Another respondent—the one who had been recalled from the United States—was also on a very different time schedule as a result of this interruption. In his case, this had far less to do with choice than with necessity, as all his meetings were now with people in a very different time zone. This highlights the fact that organizational and relational demands constitute strong forces in
structuring communicative habits. This is, however, not simply reducible to ‘perpetually on’ technologies creating ‘perpetually on’ norms.

Workplace, too, played a role in shaping time. While ESMs are mainly conceived of as facilitating asynchronous or semi-synchronous communication, our respondents reported an increase in live-streamed content, especially from corporate leadership. This suggests an organizational emphasis on ‘live-ness’ or synchronous communication during lockdown. We attribute this to a general desire by both management and the organization to present themselves as a ‘live’ organization, with a strong presence vis-à-vis employees during the lockdown, thus attempting to counteract the struggles that ‘virtual organizations’ experience, such as lack of social stimulation, informality, and improvisation (Plesner and Husted 2020, 94–5). We regard the emphasis on synchronous meetings and social media interactions to be a result of this.

While our respondents mostly felt that this showcased Workplace as a means of top-down communication, this is congruent with wider trends in communication use during the pandemic which saw an increase in social media use, but an even bigger increase in synchronous digital communication use overall (Nguyen et al. 2020). We might see this as a deliberate effort to recreate the temporal boundaries of working life, and serves to underline the centrality of working life to the everyday experience of living (cf. Gregg 2011). During the pandemic, it might even represent a primary resource for socialization, leading to a renegotiation of what types of communication the domain of the professional is supposed to utilize, but also to a reliance (forced connection) on particular types of communication platforms, most prominently those that support synchronous modes of communication (e.g. videoconferencing, but also enterprise social media).

**Communicative Contexts**

Workplace from Facebook also seems to constitute a communicative context in the everyday lives of our respondents. While the webinars and promotional materials published by Facebook in the initial months of the pandemic demonstrated how the platform Workplace was designed to be used as a meeting forum, with the aim of re-creating the conversational and connected aspects of organizations, this was not an experience echoed by our respondents. Rather, they talked about how they were not particularly keen on the organic, conversational content on Workplace. While the management and communication staff in their respective companies were active users during the lockdown, the employees in general were not, at least not according to the testimonies we received.

We attribute this in part to a lack of ambient activities in people’s lives during the lockdown, which meant that there was very little to discuss in terms of ‘water cooler’ conversation. This
was evident both in the asynchronous communication on Workplace and in the many virtual meetings that were now being held. ‘It’s not easy chatting [with your colleagues] about how the football match went when there are no football matches being played’ as one respondent put it during the strictest part of the lockdown. This is another way in which forced disconnection manifests itself—areas of life not immediately associated with co-present interaction (such as sports matches and other world events) were missing and so couldn’t play a role in the communicative rituals of everyday life.

In general, with the absence of the informal and unstructured interactions that were typical of office life, our respondents described how their teams and colleagues increased both the frequency and the breadth of structured communication. In a quantitative sense, this manifested itself in the increased number of virtual meetings, phone calls and emails. This increase in communication would sometimes feel at odds with how our respondents’ wished to optimize their own, uninterrupted workflows, but they generally understood it to be a necessity.

In terms of breadth, these mediated conversations also involved frequent discussions about the well-being of others. Both mental and physical health were frequent subjects of discussion, becoming a new communication ritual during lockdown. We interpret this to mean that our respondents felt that the broader communicative context of the professional per se had to accommodate more types of communication during the lockdown—specifically about the well-being of oneself and one’s colleagues. While this expansion may be seen ostensibly as an expression of care and may have been intended as a means for communicative cohesion—it was in fact met with some exasperation. This was expressed most clearly by two of our respondents. One (the same one who talked about the football matches) said that he felt that there was a lot of irrelevant chit-chat at many meetings—and suggested that those who felt a need to catch up ‘start the meeting five minutes earlier’ to get it over with (man, 28, two housemates). Another expressed more complex reflections in which she weighed the pros and cons of these newly ritualized phatic communications:

I know it’s really important to maintain social contact and to support one another because it is really difficult, and I do have colleagues who have young children and I think that for them it’s really nice to know that they are supported by the rest of us in the team. It’s just that I’m thinking ‘do we need to spend half an hour on video talking every day?’

(woman, 28, single)

The above quotes illustrate a central theme of the forced disconnection we have studied and appears to be a consequence of transitioning all work-related activity to digital platforms: that this new form of sociability can feel forced and actually distracts people from what they feel is the real purpose of their jobs—performing the tasks that they and others find valuable, measurable or take pride in. Viewed
through this lens, bounding the ‘personal’ off from the ‘professional’ becomes just as important for the individual as keeping the professional separate from the personal.

This is not to say that the forced disconnection led our respondents to avoid sociability in their time at home. On the contrary, several of them reported checking in on friends and acquaintances through messages on social media, and often this led to them picking up the phone or otherwise engaging in conversations with people they might otherwise not have spent much time interacting with. In this way, the lockdown afforded an opportunity to connect more with people in the realm of the personal, if not the professional. Notably, this was not a forced connection, but something they reported doing voluntarily and happily.

In the domain of the professional, the forced disconnection was more likely to afford an opportunity for uninterrupted work, free from the perceived distractions of office life. Here, our respondents refer to a common thread in popular discourses on modern working life, covering the design of office facilities, the structure of the working day and the pervasiveness of (distracting) digital media. This in turn has led to the emergence of a regular industry of self-improvement books and narratives (Gregg 2018). In short, the disconnection from distractions (usually in the form of chatty colleagues or addictive media) will lead to a deeper connection with one’s tasks (Reagle 2019). This represents a central tension between the two key challenges that knowledge workers face during the pandemic lockdown: the struggle to optimize work and work tasks and the struggle to feel a sense of social belonging in a professional context. All of this, it seems, becomes more difficult when the normal spatial and temporal bounds of the professional realm disappear.


Our analysis of forced disconnection highlights something which we imagine will become a recurring theme in the study of work patterns in the future: the boundaries not only between work and personal life within one’s own home, but also at the boundaries between one’s own home and the homes of others. In a situation where people were not only barred from access to their offices, but also lacked any sort of ‘third place’ (cafes, libraries, co-working spaces) in which they could create their own ‘bubble’ of professionalism and creativity (cf. Fast and Jansson 2019), the home becomes a forced site for the domain of the professional even more than previously.

As one interviewee put it, ‘you’re reminded of it constantly, that you’re communicating from your home to someone else’s home’ (woman, 28, single). One result of this is that people very
consciously reconfigure the visible and audible spaces in their homes that are accessible to others (such as hiding ironic paintings of Russian dictators that would simply require too much explanation in a client meeting); it has also led to a heightened awareness of the everyday goings-on of the living spaces of colleagues and business connections. In our study, this manifested itself, for example, in our childless respondents’ reactions to the antics of their colleagues’ children and pets: although they showed some sympathy, they also felt exasperation, especially when such antics were perceived as an interruption. This is a specific example of what we believe is a more general problem: that the home, a physical space which has had to become the domain of both the professional and the personal, is potentially an unruly space that is not necessarily fit for the purpose of maintaining contemporary boundaries of professionalism. This is especially evident in the discomfort that was reported by our respondents—such as the one quoted at length above—of having their homes exposed to the outside world, and, conversely, being able to see into other people’s homes.

One of the acknowledged advantages that the domain of work offers is that of general and overt recognition, in contrast to the often overlooked toil involved in house- and care-work (Hochschild 1998). This disparity is felt especially strongly in cases where relatively well-educated knowledge workers, such as our respondents, are relegated to the domestic sphere and excluded from the domain of the professional (Orgad 2019). The home risks becoming just another task subsumed under a broader heading of ‘work’, and being entangled in a web of media-facilitated and -facilitating coordinating activities that enable working life (Beckman and Mazmanian 2020). Insofar as the home must offer an ‘appropriately’ visible and functional setting, it must be professionalized and domesticated. If this turns the home into a doubly unrecognized domain—neither recognized as a support structure for ‘work’ nor as its de facto setting of the (mediated) activities of work—then this is obviously a negative development. From a media studies perspective, we must now consider media as both facilitating the integration of domains (Gregg 2011) and as avenues for the necessary recognition work (Fast and Jansson 2019) that a sustainable remote work situation would necessitate.

We propose the notion of home-home conflict to describe the phenomenon of increased permeability between and reliance upon more or less professionally arranged homes. In contrast to previous concepts used in the literature on everyday life, such as ‘home-work conflict’ or ‘home-family conflict’, the notion of the home-home conflict does not describe a dichotomy between two domains within the life of a single person. Rather it emphasizes how the home domains of two different people might conflict and clash without the concrete temporal, spatial and contextual boundaries of the professional as an intermediary.

In this case, the professional organization, with its physical boundaries and routines—and to some extent maybe even its temporal and social routines—has disappeared as a marker of the
domain of the professional. Instead, professional interactions occur from one home to another. This may present a number of problems in and of itself, such as the loss of the Goffmanian ‘back-stage’ (Goffman 1978), or an increased amount of ‘spillover’ between an individual’s professional and personal domains within the home (Berkowsky 2013). This also fundamentally changes what kind of domain the home is allowed to be. Furthermore, it may involve a greater reliance on digital platform providers, even if these have been the subject of much criticism (e.g. Vaidhyanathan 2018; Zuboff 2019). In fact, it could be said that the lockdown is providing an ideal opportunity for these platforms to further encroach on even our most intimate living spaces, including our homes, and exploit them for profit. Any sort of resistance on an individual basis is made extremely difficult under the circumstances brought about by the pandemic. In a lockdown scenario such as the one we are currently experiencing, even as we finalize this chapter, the individual may be stuck between a rock and a hard place. The traditional types of digital disconnection may result in professional and social isolation, while connection may mean relying on technologies which they are highly critical of.

In sum, a home-home conflict describes both the meeting of different homes in a professional context, and the potential for conflict within the home. Homes are often occupied by several people, and the often opposing visions of what kind of home it is to be—and how it is to be demarcated from other domains (e.g. the professional)—can potentially become a source of tension. While our study sample was limited to mainly childless professionals, other research on work during the pandemic has demonstrated how the situation has increased existing professional inequalities between men and women (Beckman and Mazmanian 2020; Orgad 2019), probably due in part to an uneven distribution of domestic and care duties (Collins et al 2020; Reichelt, Makovi, and Sargysan 2020; Squazzoni et al. 2020).

Irrespective of when the pandemic ends, experts across the globe expect remote work to play a fundamental part in society for the foreseeable future.

Thus, even if quarantines and lockdowns ease, the likelihood is that workers will still be left with the problem of optimizing their own lives—both personal and professional—within a limited space. Applying the concept of home-home conflict, we suggest that there is an urgent need for the continued study of boundary work in order to understand the communicative and social implications of the home having to forcibly perform the ‘double duty’ of being both the domain of the professional and the personal.
Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed disconnection as a forced structural circumstance which has separated individuals from their usual spatial, temporal, and social routines. Under the Covid-19 pandemic, when face-to-face encounters were severely restricted, digital communication technologies played a vital role in maintaining connections and continuing the daily routines of work, school and so on. Our analysis of forced disconnection and the increased reliance on digital connectivity to collaborate and push back against social isolation adds a new and media agnostic perspective to the scholarly discussions and public ideas of ‘detoxes’ from and connections to social media. Forced disconnection may mean people being forbidden to meet face to face, as we have seen in this chapter. However, it may also take the form of specific (distractive) websites or devices being forcibly shut down while using digital technologies provided by the workplace, or be the result of breakdowns in infrastructure that cut off digital or other means of communication altogether. Similarly, how people overcome forced disconnection may rely on whatever substitute means of communication are available. Disconnection, then, is not merely a matter of turning away from digital media as part of nostalgically longing for purely analogue forms of connecting with oneself and others. We may also understand disconnection as the act of selecting the optimal mode of communication from a range of alternative modes of communication (e.g. synchronous or asynchronous, one-to-one, many-to-many) in order to connect and get things done in a given context at a given time (Helles 2013).

For our respondents, the ESM Workplace from Facebook did not play the central, structuring role for the professional that Facebook intended it to. However, the communicative context of the professional per se expanded significantly. This meant that the domain of the professional was often experienced as all-encompassing, eclipsing spatial boundaries, temporal boundaries and hitherto delineated social contexts. This last point caused our respondents particular chagrin, which suggests that boundary work to maintain some separation of contexts remains a valuable practical and analytical category for disconnection research, as well as for studies into the future of work.

Our analysis of forced disconnection engages with the longstanding and ongoing struggle to establish boundaries between home and work through communicative practices, as manifested by, for example, people’s attempts to balance their professional and personal or sociable types of communication during the pandemic lockdown. Working from home thus raises questions about both the kind and depth of (re)connection facilitated by digital media. We found that the forced disconnection—in these cases—might provide an opportunity to connect deeply with one’s work as an optimizable process. What was more difficult was navigating a sense of social connection when most of the routine and ritualized interactions with colleagues and co-workers were gone, as was setting.
boundaries between different domains when people were left to their own devices. This boundary-setting can become even more difficult when utilizing live video chat services and ostensibly sociable social media for work purposes, as has been observed under the current pandemic circumstances.

If future professional interactions are more likely to take place directly between two homes, this may well lead to further future complications and necessitate a renegotiation of boundaries between the professional and the personal. In this way, the ‘forced disconnection’ manifested itself as a dual struggle: trying to fulfil the desire for professional optimization while making it harder to achieve sociability without compromising on the integrity of the domain of home—so giving in to both professional pressures and to digital service providers and social media platforms which we might otherwise want to resist.

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References (Article IV)


Article V
An organisational cultivation of digital resignation?
Enterprise social media, privacy, and autonomy

Abstract

Enterprise social media (ESM) have largely gone ignored in discussions of the datafication practices of social media platforms. This article presents an initial step towards filling this research gap. My research question in this article regards how employees of companies using the ESM Workplace from Facebook feel that the implementation of this particular platform relates to their potential struggles for digital privacy and work–life segmentation. Methodologically, I explore this through a qualitative interview study of 21 Danish knowledge workers in different organisations using the ESM. The central analytical proposal of the article is that the interviewees express a “digital resignation” towards the implementation of the ESM. In contrast to previous discussions, this resignation cannot only be thought of as “corporately cultivated” by third parties, but must also be considered as “organisationally cultivated” by the organisations people work for. The study suggests that datafication-oriented media studies should consider organisational contexts.

Keywords: datafication, enterprise social media, privacy paradox, autonomy paradox, Workplace from Facebook
Introduction

Today’s professionals are caught in the middle of at least two significant struggles related to the ubiquity of digital communication technologies in everyday life. The first of these struggles, which I here term the struggle for work–life segmentation, has been characterised by an “autonomy paradox”, where the ostensible flexibility offered by digital, mobile communication technologies leads to professionals finding it much harder to “get away” from work (Mazmanian et al., 2013). The second struggle – the struggle for digital privacy – has been characterised by a “privacy paradox” (Kokolakis, 2017), where individuals may express concerns with keeping their own personal data safe from unwanted intrusions but take very few concrete steps towards protecting themselves.

In this article, I present an empirical study of how these two paradoxes overlap in the domain of working life with the implementation of a particular type of communications technology: Enterprise social media (ESM) (Leonardi et al., 2013). The central research question of this article is in what way, if at all, individuals view the implementation of an ESM as something which they are resistant to, with reference to the struggles for work–life balance and digital privacy. Specifically, I study users of the software Work-place from Facebook. This focus was chosen as Facebook has become an exemplifier of negative datafication practices, and thus acts as a threat to digital privacy (see Gerlitz & Helmond, 2013; Zuboff, 2019). At the same time, the platform has been associated with a potential for “context collapse”, which may challenge work–life segmentation (Vitak, 2012). However, this specific branch of their products has thus far not been mentioned by any of the significant works criticising them as a platform and as a company (e.g., Vaidhyanathan, 2018; Zuboff, 2019). Workplace thus acts as a strategic focus point for studying perceptions of datafication via social media in the context of work.

I interrogate this through a qualitative interview study of 21 Danish knowledge workers. This category of workers was sampled as the existing research suggests that they clearly experience the struggles with digital privacy and work–life balance. I draw on the explanation of the widely felt “digital resignation” (Draper & Turow, 2019) as an explanation for people’s attitudes towards potential datafication practices by corporations. As I will argue, the organisations (corporate or otherwise) my interviewees are a part of, are seen both as a potential buffer to which individual employees’ concerns of digital privacy can be outsourced, and as a source of potential threat towards digital privacy and autonomy in their own right. Hence, I therefore propose that digital resignation should not only be considered as “corporately cultivated”, but also “organisationally cultivated”. As both organisations (Bromley & Meyer, 2015; Perrow, 1991) and social
media (Lomborg, 2014) are a pervasive part of everyday life, I suggest this as a consideration for the future study of the efforts for work–life segmentation and digital privacy.

**The struggles for digital privacy and work–life segmentation**

An often unspoken, if necessary, competency in the contemporary job market is the management of boundaries between work and personal life (Banghart et al., 2018; van Zoonen et al., 2016). The increased pervasiveness of digital media in both the personal and professional realm has been linked to an increasing integration of these two domains (Villadsen, 2017; Wajcman, 2015). This is especially true for what we might term “knowledge workers”, who are characterised by a reliance on information and communication technologies in everyday life (Gregg, 2011). It should of course be noted that the ability to segment off personal life from other arenas is generally seen as a central part of living a good life for *all* types of workers (Wajcman, 2015; Zuboff, 2019).

While digital communications media may be said to aid in enacting constant connectivity (Mazmanian et al., 2013), they also aid in processes of datafication (Breiter & Hepp, 2018). In these processes, many parts of social life are rendered into digital traces (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013). Broadly speaking, this may pose a threat to digital privacy, as this process can be said to grant new insights but also “makes it possible to keep track of people and regulate behaviour in new and problematic ways” (Flyverbom, 2019: 6). In terms of scope, it is “almost impossible to perform most daily activities without revealing personal information and providing fodder for data brokers and big data organisations, whether they are private or public” (Mai, 2016: 193). This is especially relevant in the realm of communications and social media in particular, as, for instance, Jensen and Helles (2017) point out, with reference to the fact that humans “cannot *not* communicate [emphasis original]” (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 49). This, in turn, can become the subject of processes of predictive analytics that can have far-reaching consequences for an individual’s life (e.g., Zuboff, 2019).

**Response and resistance: A pair of paradoxes**

For the purposes of this article, the struggles pertaining to work–life segmentation and digital privacy share an implicit wish to keep the domain of the personal bounded off from the
professional. Previous research clarifying the two paradoxes have, in the general responses to the ubiquity of both, domain-integrating communications technologies and datafication practices, respectively. Both paradoxes highlight how individuals often act contradictory to their own expressed wishes as it pertains to both of these boundary creations.

When workers are given a great deal of professional freedom in the choice of their location, timing, and performance of work via digital technologies, they often end up “enacting a norm of continual connectivity and accessibility” (Mazmanian et al., 2013: 1). This is the so-called autonomy paradox where, contrary to potential expectations, the same knowledge workers do not necessarily conceive of this as something which makes them feel frustrated or trapped (Mazmanian et al., 2013). This performance of connectivity has also been conceptualised as a “cynical practice” (Villadsen, 2017) that individuals accept because they see it as advantageous.

The “privacy paradox” describes how, even though people express a great deal of concern with the increased datafication of their everyday lives, they take very few concrete and measurable steps in counteracting their own datafication (Kokolakis, 2017). In general, explanations for this have either tacitly or explicitly leaned on personal responsibility, thus individualising the struggle. This has historical origins, as the basic approach to privacy protection has, since the 1970s, mainly featured discussions of (lack of) two-party informed consent for information exchange (Solove, 2013). Many recent explanations for the privacy paradox have thus either highlighted a model of rational exchange or one of ignorance. In other words, in these studies, people are either engaged in rational exchange of their information or they are unaware that they are engaged in any exchange at all (see, e.g., Hoofnagle & Urban, 2014; Park, 2013). The explanation of rational exchange is not supported by the empirical findings that – for instance – privacy policies are some of the least-read documents in the world, according to recent scholarship (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2020). On the other hand, while the full extent and complexity of the “exchange” of data is likely poorly understood by the end user, this does not mean that users are fully unaware of the exchange. This has led to the emergence of a third explanatory model, as I discuss below: digital resignation (Draper & Turow, 2019; Hargittai & Marwick, 2016). This model serves as the theoretical grounding of this article.

Digital resignation

In contrast to the two models discussed above, the most recent line of explanations for the privacy paradox has suggested that the end users have ultimately “resigned” to their datafication (Draper & Turow, 2019; Hargittai & Marwick, 2016). In the framework of digital resignation, the end users are
dissatisfied with the pervasive monitoring in contemporary digital spaces, but also convinced of its inescapability (Draper & Turow, 2019). The feelings of resignation reported by many users originate with this perception of the inevitability of privacy violations (Hargittai & Marwick, 2016). However, Draper and Turow (2019) stress that this does not indicate a complete abdication of self-protecting behaviour. Draper and Turow have also demonstrated how this digital resignation is “corporately cultivated”. This means that the practices of opacity and obfuscation on the part of corporations are ultimately there to engender resignation in their end users. Despite the recently increased interest in the phenomenon of digital resignation, there seems to be little research on the phenomenon in a professional or organisational context. This article acts as an initial effort towards filling this research gap.

In this article, I proceed from an understanding of digital resignation as – at least in part – a discursive strategy for reflecting on one’s own practices with digital media. This resignation can then be uncovered in reflection (elicited here via qualitative interviews) in which practices are both recounted and reflected upon. All of this was further elicited by homing in on their experiences with – and reflections about their usage of – the ESM Workplace from Facebook.

**Workplace from Facebook**

Specific technologies may functionally “disappear” in the study of organisational life, both by virtue of being taken for granted and by virtue of being too complex to understand (Zammuto et al., 2007). For the reasons explained below, I expected this would not be the case with Workplace. As a rule, enterprise social media are digital platforms which have many of the same affordances as “public” social media platforms but are defined by being internal to a particular organisation (Leonardi et al., 2013). They are platforms characterised by the “many-to-many” communication that is associated with social media in general, as opposed to the usual understanding of intranet platforms as one-to-many, top-down communication in an organisational context (Heide, 2015). In other words, most ESM platforms “mimic in look, feel, and functionality popular social networking sites such as Facebook” (Leonardi et al., 2013: 2).

Facebook, evidently tired of being mimicked, launched their own ESM in 2016, Workplace from Facebook (formerly Facebook at Work and Workplace by Facebook). From a user’s perspective, Workplace functions much in the same way as the public Facebook platform, and it is accessible through mobile apps or web browsers. Users have individual profile pages in their own name, which they may edit and from which they can broadcast information and post updates. This information may then appear in the scrollable newsfeeds of other users. For more specialised information and
communication, there are “groups” which can be joined, as well as one-to-one messaging in chat. The most significant deviation from the public platform is that all members of a given organisation are “connected” by default, and they can proceed to message, tag, or otherwise interact with one another without further technical barriers.

Datafication is a foundational aspect of the regular Facebook platform itself, and its parent company is a well-debated example in this regard (e.g., Gerlitz & Helmond, 2013; Zuboff, 2019). Facebook is also a highly criticised object both as a company and as a technology (see Karppi, 2018; Portwood-Stacer, 2013; Vaidhyanathan, 2018). Its enterprise counterpart thus acts as a strategically chosen object on the background of which the resistance (or lack thereof) to ESM as datafication technologies may be explored. This particular platform thus represents a key flashpoint where the two struggles (for digital privacy and work–life segmentation) intersect. The regular Facebook platform is an exemplar of well-known genres of communication in the everyday lives of millions of people (see Lomborg, 2014) which has now migrated into the domain of work. The regular Facebook platform is widely adopted in Denmark (Danmarks Statistik, 2020). For my interviewees, Workplace thus represents an example of “personal” communication venturing into the “professional” domain, and thus a potential additional threat to the ability to segment off the personal from the professional. This allowed my respondents to very clearly articulate how they believe the ESM platform does and does not differ from the personal platform and ultimately discuss how they feel it plays a different role – if any – in their lives. The unit of analysis is thus how they experienced this platform in their everyday lives, accessed by way of qualitative interviews.

Data collection

Sampling and recruitment

The motivation for the sampling was seeking a relative homogeneity in the interviewees as relatively young “knowledge workers” with some tertiary education behind them, while seeking a maximum variance in terms of what kinds of organisations they worked at. This was in order to reduce the potential “bias” sampling within a single organisation or a single industry. The aim was to uncover the experiences of knowledge workers using Workplace without emphasising a particular organisational setting.

As this was a relatively “rare” population, the recruitment strategy was mainly reliant on a network sampling (see Bryman, 2012; Lee, 2008). The organisations using Workplace varied in terms of size (ranging from 20 to 11,000 employees), and industry (including nongovernmental
organisations, fitness, construction, communications, publishing, and medical technology). Potential organisations from which to recruit were identified via publicly available materials mentioning their use of Workplace. An initial respondent from each organisation was then recruited through my extended network (if possible) and, failing this, through contacting employees via official communications channels. After a completed interview, the initial respondent in a given organisation would then help solicit up to two more participants from the same organisation, though this was not always achieved.

Twenty-one interviewees, 14 male and 7 female, were recruited from eleven different organisations. Geographically, all but three worked in the capital region of Denmark. Their ages ranged from 26 to 36, with most being 30 or younger. Their status as knowledge workers meant they belonged to a category which is often at the forefront of feeling how communications technologies reshape the boundaries of working life (Gregg, 2011). Their relative youth meant they were generally in their first full-time jobs, which may be associated with presumptions of high personal investment in the workplace (Petersen, 2020). As a minor consideration, I proceeded from the expectation that their relatively well-educated status might be an indicator of such cultural capital, since resistance to digital media is often related to large amounts of cultural capital (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). Thus, I had reason to expect they might experience the struggles for work–life balance and digital privacy clearly, and that they might be cognisant of criticisms of the companies behind social media platforms.

**Interviews**

Previous studies have tried to elicit qualitative experiences of datafication via, for instance, focus groups consisting mostly of university students (Hargittai & Marwick, 2016) or quantitative questionnaires of employees (Vitak et al., 2018). This study proceeded from a qualitative, one-on-one, interview-based methodology with a semistructured interview guide. This approach was chosen in order to explore people’s overall individual impressions and attitudes about their organisation’s implementation of Workplace, and whether they considered themselves subjects of adverse datafication processes because of this. The interview guide was designed to capture specific experiences with digital communications technologies in working life and subsequently offer my interviewees a chance to reflect on their practices and attitudes with Workplace. The interview design was thus broadly “doxastic” (Brinkmann, 2007) in its initial phases. Here, they first described specific experiences with the ESM (both their introduction to the platform as well as experiences of posting, commenting, liking, and consuming content) and their evaluation and attitudes about what
purpose the platform served for both themselves as individuals and the organisation as a whole. In the closing phases, I turned to a more probing mode of interviewing. Here, I challenged and elicited responses about the struggles for digital privacy and work–life segmentation that might otherwise remain implicit. This was usually done by inquiring point-blank about their opinions – if any – about Facebook as a corporation. Following this, I asked whether they felt any worries about their organisation implementing a solution developed by this company and why.

The Interviews usually ranged between one and two hours in length, with a single outlier lasting only 30 minutes. They took place between May 2019 and April 2020. Though the plan was to perform all interviews face-to-face, a combination of busy professional schedules and the Covid-19 pandemic led to more than half the interviews being performed remotely, usually at the insistence of the people I interviewed.

Analysis

The analysis started from a mapping of the attitudes towards the potential datafication presented by Workplace in particular and the general trend of datafication in digital communications more broadly. Responses displayed a wide variety of attitudes towards their own datafication in both work and personal life. Building on the established ex- planations in the research, coding showed that these attitudes displayed tiny hints of rational exchange, some evidence of ignorance, and more prominently a broad category of responses consistent with resignation. I focused on resignation as a central model of explanation for the particular context of work. This was due to both to the frequency of signs of this attitude, as well as the overall finding, which was most surprising: I could find no examples of active resistance or opposition to Workplace by virtue of the platform being developed by Facebook.

This led me to search for elements in the responses where people implicitly described Facebook the company (and whichever services and companies they associated and compared with it) in the initial sections of the interview. I compared these with their responses in the more confrontational final sections of the interview. As I will expli- cate below, people were usually neither entirely unaware nor uncritical of Facebooks practices, but usually found themselves surprised that they had never considered these criticisms vis-à-vis Workplace. Here, I interrogated the data for both implicit and explicit justifications for this oversight, as perceived by the people I interviewed. My aim was to situate the (lack of) resistance and criticism towards Workplace within the broader descriptions of life with digital media that the people in this study related.
In turn, this led me to seek out where the worries in the lives of my respondents with regard to the ESM technology may instead be located. This resulted in developing themes of people both perceiving a hypothetical danger in the immediate environment (the organisation), while emphasising the organisation as a source of safety vis-à-vis the datafication practices of tech giants. This then developed into my central proposal in this article: digital resignation can be thought of as not just “corporately cultivated” as a part of everyday life with media, as Draper and Turow (2019) put it, but it can also be an essential part of accepting one’s position within, and belonging to, an organisation.

The analysis shows this by first exemplifying the general responses to the privacy paradox, before moving on to discussing how the autonomy paradox is negotiated across a range of digital media. Following this, I discuss how the negotiations of both paradoxes were related to the workplace as an organisational context.

**Techlash – or lack thereof**

I expected to encounter very explicit resistance to the implementation of Workplace in particular, and of Facebook and technology companies in general. My suspicion was grounded in the fact that the interviews were performed in 2019 and early 2020, a period of immense public debate and numerous public scandals, surrounding Facebook in particular. What I found, instead, was a description of attitudes which I found best mapped on to the explanatory model of “digital resignation” (Draper & Turow, 2019). When pressed about their knowledge of the data collection and business practices of Facebook as both a company and a platform, the people I spoke to were far from ignorant, if occasionally somewhat hyperbolic in their summaries:

”[I am] aware that all of this is probably very evil and dangerous and that all sorts of crap is being collected about you. But on the other hand, I’m like “I’m probably not all that interesting – go nuts” [laughs].”

(woman, 26, IT company)

The above quoted respondent was not alone in expressing an attitude like this. The underlying assumption seems to be that – vis-à-vis the technology companies, one is, as an individual, pretty uninteresting, and therefore one is less concerned with any potential datafication one might be subject to. As another put it, “big data is worth a lot – but my personal data? Not worth that much” (man, 27, medico-technical company). In general, I interpret the interviewees as being aware of the monetisation models of ostensibly “free” social media platforms such as
Facebook, Instagram, and so on. A few even volunteered variations on the axiom “if you’re not paying then you are the product” (man, 29, medico-technical company). This, if nothing else, displays at least a surface-level awareness of datafication processes. The effects of these datafication processes were something which my respondents were able to conceptualise and criticise in the abstract – but they offered little in terms of concrete examples from their own lives. In other words, they did not themselves feel adversely targeted by these processes. This in turn contributed to a feeling of not being personally affected by these processes at all.

This does not mean that the interviewees did not criticise Facebook as a company, or their multiple platforms and services. The criticism was more often aimed at the practices they felt these platforms encouraged, rather than how they themselves felt subjugated or exploited by these platforms. This criticism was also not without its nuances. Occasionally, my interviewees would express some degree of admiration of recognition of the business empire built by Facebook, even if they found its societal impact at large to be less than ideal.

That being said, while “ignorance” could not serve as an overall explanation for accepting the implementation of Workplace in particular, there were still some areas of confusion and doubt, most notably around the business model (“I might imagine some of the payment to be in data” [man, 28, publishing company]). While this ambiguity about the business model might be suspected as leading to a greater feeling of threat to one’s autonomy, this was not what was expressed in the interviews. Rather, the uncertainties expressed attained to the level of the communicative per se. The implementation of ESM was not perceived as a source of danger due to their potential for exploitative datafication by either Facebook or the organisation people worked for, but due the danger they represented as communicative arenas. This becomes even more clear in the subsequent sections.

Professional and personal lives embedded in media

All the people I interviewed described a life lived across digital communication tools and social platforms – platforms which in some way crossed the boundaries of their work and personal life. This could refer to answering a personal text in the middle of the workday, checking their e-mails on a Sunday evening to be prepared for the coming week, or merely taking a few minutes to scroll through their Facebook feed or check their Snapchat messages if they felt like they needed a break at work. Nobody among my sample was not a user of several social media – and crucially, everyone had a Facebook profile. In this way, digital communications crossed the boundaries between the domains of the personal and professional with great frequency.
The reasons given for this were varied and multiple. Overall, however, I take this to be a sign of the “integration” of professional and personal life that is often characteristi of knowledge workers (Gregg, 2011). This was pointedly expressed by one project manager, who reflected on the trouble with separating these spheres of life accordingly:

But I’m also convinced that you aren’t two people. I am just as much my work-personality as I am my private-personality. It has only caused me more stress to try and separate it. (man, 30, project leader)

To be clear, this did not mean that no efforts were being taken to separate the spheres of the personal and the professional, merely that the people in this study had an awareness of themselves in different contexts, and of having to negotiate context-appropriate communicative practices.

Returning to the idea of ESM, these appear as a category of media which blurs the boundaries between these two realms. Workplace in particular may be an especially boundary-blurring technology, as its design, affordances – and to some extent its branding – are very reminiscent of a platform that people are already familiar with, and which may occupy a specific position within their everyday lives. As one interviewee expressed it:

"Connecting more closely with my colleagues is not something I’m seeking out on a daily basis. They’re colleagues, and I don’t need there to be a mishmashing for them to end up somewhere between friends and colleagues. I’m trying to keep my private life out of it, and I feel like Workplace is somewhere in the middle.”

(man, 28, medico-technical company)

This returns to a central point of this article, namely that integrating an enterprise social media – or at least Workplace in particular – represents integration of the communicative sociability usually associated with social media (Lomborg, 2014) into working life. This sociability is usually associated with the domain of the personal, and it can be hard to ascertain what to make of it within the realm of the professional organisation. What was described overall is the fear of a “context collapse”. A “context collapse” is, in the broadest sense of the term, a description of when different social contexts collapse within the experienced world of a person and is often discussed with attention to social media (Vitak, 2012). I return to this point below, suggesting that this is where the anxieties about Workplace were most clearly felt – rather than in any experience of surveillance or datafication. Here, I return again to the autonomy paradox: The onus seems to be on the individual to create their own boundaries, if not with regards to their actual work tasks, then at least in terms of
their communicative engagement with their organisation as such. These unclear expectations are a disturbance to the perceived autonomy, since it becomes unclear for the individual how they are expected to – for instance – react to content on the ESM outside of work hours.

**Organisations as sites of danger and safety**

In general, presence on online platforms has often been construed as a risk, due to the presence of multiple audiences from a variety of contexts, and the resulting potential for “context collapse” (Vitak, 2012). This is no less problematic within the context of organisational communication and can lead to a variety of coping and self-silencing strategies on the part of the employees (see Madsen & Verhoeven, 2016). This is congruent with the findings, that – at least in a Danish context – the opposition towards increasing surveillance is strongly felt within the workplace (Wiecek & Sætman, 2002), and opposition to surveillance or monitoring of and via digital technologies being especially strongly felt (Jørgensen, 2019).

The immediate environment – their place of work – plays a far greater role in the fears and antipathies of employees than the tech corporations do. In some cases, the separation of the professional and the personal actually ends up strengthening the resignation, since the realm of the personal is already seen as datafied. Protecting the realm of the professional is thus a secondary concern.

The people in this study were primarily concerned with surveillance of their immediate vicinity, and the communicative difficulties this perceivably creates. When asked what they worried about regarding data and metrics on the platform, they were far more prone to say they were concerned with their own superiors using it as a metric for performance, or systematically noting who did and did not like a post by a superior, than they were concerned with, for instance, Facebook or Google gaining access to any of this information:

[Hypothetically] We might find out who we are supposed to let go by looking at something they don’t… that they are not aware they are being measured on. I don’t think we are either clever or cynical enough to do that in here. But it does cross my mind when I see people push out [these kinds of software]. (woman, 26, IT company)

This was also compounded by a few of the testimonials noting some of this lack of clarity in the rules for the communication that takes place on these platforms, and how this communication may or may not be interpreted adversely or used in unintended manners within the organisation. Here, I would like to surmise that insofar as my respondents feel digitally resigned (see Draper & Turow, 2019), they do so because of their general resignation towards the media
environment of their organisations. Workplace becomes a software utilised in everyday work much like any other medium, and any privacy concerns are outsourced to the organisation.

Because they belonged to an organisation which expected them to use this software, they expressed some confidence that this was a decision which had been made by someone in the organisation with the appropriate knowledge. It was assumed that this person or persons had the requisite expertise to make this decision. Accordingly, the ESM is accepted by my interviewees in line with any other piece of software they are expected to integrate into their everyday professional duties. This is not to say that the people in this study were uncritical of the implementation of the ESM, or of the people who they perceived as making the decision to implement it. Still, no one expressed concerns that this decision had been made in ignorance – at least insofar as the underlying business models and potentials for datafication were concerned.

One mitigating factor here might be that this study is mainly situated in a Scandinavian context, where societal trust is at a high level (Delhey & Newton, 2005). Similarly, public expectations of sustainability, transparency, and equity in the workplace are often highlighted as Scandinavian characteristics (e.g., Strand, 2009). This might contrast with a perceived erosion of social trust linked to the rise of datafication technologies in, for instance, the context of the US (e.g., Zuboff, 2019). As any direct nation-to-nation comparisons are beyond the scope of this article, I merely offer it as a point of future consideration.

Discussion: An organisational cultivation of digital resignation?

Work and organisations play a central part in our everyday life (Perrow, 1991), and the context of the professional, in particular, seems more and more poised to be the most important realm in everyday life (Gregg, 2011). Therefore, I advocate that the increasingly critical inquiry of the last few years about the role that technology platforms play in everyday life be supplemented with an awareness that life plays out in and through a variety of organisations. These organisations have a role to play in how digital technologies are shaped, and how they shape everyday life in turn. While social media are usually discussed as having to achieve a critical mass of users through network effects (Chesney & Lawson, 2015), the structured context of an organisation can provide far more concrete motivations for signing up, even if these memberships may involve questionable datafication practices. Alternatively, this context may afford diffuse communication norms that complicate a segmentation between the personal and the professional, and this constitutes a
problem for which the organisation is at least partially responsible. As this study has demonstrated, even if the communicative norms and datafication practices are merely unclear (as opposed to explicitly harmful), then this poses problems as well. If the knowledge workers in this study place great trust in the organisations they work for, this is not exactly remarkable. The organisations of everyday life are already marked by their potential to create structures that offload and outsource tasks, worries, and concerns. “Faced with any problematic situations, the modern impulse is to create more organizational structures”, as organisational scholars Bromley and Meyer (2015: 4) put it. This “outsourcing” of worries – which I have discussed in this article as a variation of “digital resignation” – is not necessarily total. Nonetheless, it leaves a great deal of employee trust and resulting responsibility in the hands of organisations. The individuals I have spoken to during this study have resigned themselves both to being datafied subjects in the hands of third-party technology companies and have also resigned themselves to following the decisions about the implementation of Workplace and similar technologies in their companies. This creates the possibility of an employee that is not just under surveillance or quantified (Ball, 2010; Moore, 2017), but outright datafied.

Both the struggles for privacy and work–life balance were met with what I would term a sense of resignation (see Draper & Turow, 2019), which was justified by a reliance on – or perhaps resignation to – the organisation. The outcome of this are high levels of organisational responsibility. Not only are their employees digitally resigned in a general sense, but they are also resigned to the solutions their companies require them to use, and the datafication this entails. This presents a real risk of an increasingly asymmetrical power relation, with the organisation potentially quantifying and evaluating ever more domains of professional life, creating more uncertainty for the employee (Moore, 2017). While ESM are hailed as allowing greater knowledge sharing and dehierarchisation (see, e.g., Heide, 2015), this must be tempered with an awareness that if people are unsure of either the communicative norms or the potential datafication they undergo, this may be a serious hindrance to their perceived freedom to act. These asymmetrical power relations also mean that workplaces were viewed, on the one hand, as a source safety vis-à-vis the surveillance of tech giants, while on the other, still being a source of danger in terms of internal surveillance via ESM technologies. It must be stressed, however, that this was mainly a hypothetical concern – judging by what was relayed to me.

This study is limited to an exploratory, qualitative study of a limited number of Danish “knowledge worker” participants. Future studies may fruitfully explore whether this phenomenon of digital resignation in an organisational setting may be found more broadly among all types of workers and in other national contexts. Furthermore, it has
been beyond the scope of this paper to map the actual affordances for datafication inher-ent in ESM technologies, and whom exactly these potentials benefit. This has appeared as an important source of uncertainty in the experiences of my interviewees, and thus provides a fruitful venue for future research, if the concept of digital resignation is to be comprehensively explored in working life.

Conclusions

The struggles for privacy and autonomy in the face of the increased ubiquity of digital communications find a very salient overlap in the arena of working life. The ability to wall off personal and professional life is generally seen as a desirable quality, yet also as something which is complicated by the ability to be not only “always on”, but also “always tracked” by digital communication technologies. As I have argued, enterprise social media in particular are a potential site for these struggles to come to the forefront in the lives of individual people.

While one might expect a large degree of criticism to emerge from employees in the face of the implementation of this specific software, this was not what this interview study of 21 knowledge workers uncovered. Instead, they displayed attitudes congruent with the concept of “digital resignation” (Draper & Turow, 2019). In the discussion portion of this article, I emphasised how this resignation was to some extent “organisationally cultivated” by the mechanisms of both control and trust that play a part in organisational belonging. The “worry” about third-party datafication was outsourced to “someone else” in the relevant organisation and mitigated by a general trust in the organisation’s structures and safety measures. However, some lingering doubt about the potential for intra-organisational surveillance remained among some of the people in this study.

I end with the recommendation that future studies of media – considered as technologies of communication and datafication – should consider the organisational contexts in which these media unfold, as well as the datafication capabilities inherent in professional digital media per se. These organisations and media should both be discussed as social contexts and as accountable agents in their own right.

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References (Article V)


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This PhD dissertation consist of an introductory framing text (da. “kappe”) and five research articles. The topic of this dissertation is the boundary and intersection between work and non-work, the personal and the professional. The focus of this dissertation is social media, and more specifically enterprise social media. The empirical subject is the enterprise social medium Workplace from Meta (née Workplace from Facebook). The research question underlying this dissertation is how the uses and interpretations of enterprise social media complicate the boundary between the personal and the professional, or work and non-work.

The framing text consists of five chapters preceded by a short overture. In the overture, I hint at the themes of the dissertation through the analysis of a personal anecdote. In the first proper chapter, I introduce the problem area (the boundary between work and non-work and the role media has in shaping this boundary), the research case (the Enterprise social medium Workplace from Meta) and the research questions. In the second chapter, I provide an overview of both work and social media as contexts unto themselves. In this same chapter, I outline how the thus-far mutual disinterest of media studies and studies of working life leave enterprise social media in a middle area between disciplines. In the third chapter, I outline the research methods which underlies the empirical research articles of this project. This method is inspired by media reception studies and seeks to understand how a selection of empirical users (n=28) interpret and use Workplace from Meta through qualitative interviews. In the fourth chapter of the framing text, I discuss the findings of this research project, highlighting how Workplace from Meta occupies a middle space between work and non-work, in that it is a medium for the professional context which is heavily reliant upon familiarity with social media from personal life. I end this chapter by suggesting how this should inform future research. In the fifth and final chapter, I summarize the conclusions of the overall research project.

In the first research article, titled “Social Media and Work: A Framework of Eight Intersections” (published in the International Journal of Communication) I present a review of areas in the existing research where social media and work intersect. After delineating the two terms “social media” and “work,” I outline 8 conceptualizations describing different types of intersection between these two domains: (1) social media before work, (2) social media instead of work, (3) social media for work, (4) social media about work, (5) social media as work, (6) social media under work, (7)
work for social media, and (8) social media after work. I proceed to discuss how these different conceptualizations might give rise to (empirical) differences in how individuals experience social media and work, and how the two themes provide different analytical foci. I end with a conclusion on how research should be sensitized to a world of post-social media work.

In the second research article, titled “Digital Disconnection Research in Review: What, How and Who?” (Submitted for review), I review how the backlash against digital media has manifested in everyday practices of digital disconnection, or deliberate non-use of media. This article seeks to create an overview of the last decade of empirical disconnection research, tracing both its overarching tendencies and its boundaries. This is done through an analysis of 346 empirical studies on digital disconnection. For the purposes of this article, digital disconnection research is defined by a research ethos which does not see the act of media non-use or restricted media use as something to be remedied. In review, the typical interest of the research has been in studying relatively young and individualized agents’ disconnection from social media, a disconnection which is often temporary or partial. Therefore, the discussion portion of the article considers the opportunity for the openness of digital disconnection studies to extend even further, with particular emphasis on structures and contexts where disconnection may not only be problematized by the imperatives of “always on” communication, specifically in working life.

In the third research article, titled “Professional, Transmedia Selves: Finding a Place for Enterprise Social Media” (submitted for review), I proceed from an expanded view of transmedia theory to argue how enterprise social media (ESM), and especially Workplace from Meta, present an opportunity for digital self-presentation. The argument is that ordinary users are now cast in the role of transmedia producers, who must figure out what unique contribution ESM can provide. The chapter then proceeds to outline three individual case studies of how integration of the ESM Workplace from Facebook may unfold. The cases illustrate how considerations of both self-promotion, citizenship in the workplace or using the playful functionalities of ESM may both encourage use and ultimately marginalize the medium in worker's personal transmedia ecology.

In the fourth research article, titled “Overcoming Forced Disconnection: Disentangling the Professional and the Personal in Pandemic Times” (published in the anthology Reckoning with Social Media, eds. Aleena Chia, Ana Jorge and Tero Karppi), co-authored with Stine Lomborg, I turn to the question of what role Workplace plays when the lowercase-w workplace disappears. Analysing the interviews conducted during the first peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we examine which role Workplace is understood to play during the, at the time, extraordinary circumstances brought about by the lockdown. Here, the evidence suggests that the phatic communicative affordances of Workplace were secondary to more “live” forms of
communication. Additionally, the COVID-19 lockdowns represented a clear example of work migrating into the domain of the personal, potentially eroding temporal, spatial and social boundaries along the way. Under these circumstances, not only was Workplace a medium which had “migrated” from the personal into professional life, professional life had now plunked itself unavoidably into the personal. In addition to providing more examples of the negotiations about what kind of communication Workplace is supposed to promote, this article also illustrates the difficulty of relying on this medium for community at work, especially under circumstances where working life became particularly reliant upon digital media.

In the fifth and final research article, titled ”An organisational cultivation of digital resignation? Enterprise social media, privacy, and autonomy” (published in Nordicom Review 42(s4)), I discuss how Enterprise social media (ESM) have largely gone ignored in discussions of the datafication practices of social media platforms. I presents an initial step towards filling this research gap. My research question in this article regards how employees of companies using the ESM Workplace from Facebook feel that the implementation of this particular platform relates to their potential struggles for digital privacy and work–life segmentation. Methodologically, I explore this through a qualitative interview study of 21 Danish knowledge workers in different organisations using the ESM. The central analytical proposal of the article is that the interviewees express a “digital resignation” towards the implementation of the ESM. In contrast to previous discussions, this resignation cannot only be thought of as “corporately cultivated” by third parties but must also be considered as “organisationally cultivated” by the organisations people work for. The study suggests that datafication-oriented media studies should consider organisational contexts.
Dansk Resume


I den første forskningsartikel, med titlen "Social Media and Work: A Framework of Eight Intersections" (udgivet i International Journal of Communication) præsenterer jeg en gennemgang af områder i den eksisterende forskning, hvor sociale medier og arbejde overlapper. Efter at have afgrænset de to begreber "sociale medier" og "arbejde", skitserer jeg 8 konceptualiseringer, der beskriver forskellige typer af skæringspunkter mellem disse to domæner: (1) sociale medier før arbejde,
(2) sociale medier i stedet for arbejde, (3) sociale medier til arbejdsformål, (4) sociale medier om arbejde, (5) sociale medier som arbejde, (6) sociale medier under arbejde, (7) arbejde for sociale medier og (8) sociale medier efter arbejde. Jeg fortsætter med at diskutere, hvordan disse forskellige konceptualiseringer kan give anledning til (empiriske) forskelle i, hvordan individer oplever sociale medier og arbejder, og hvordan de to temaer giver forskellige analytiske fokuspunkter. Jeg slutter af med en konklusion om, hvordan forskning bør sensibiliseres over for en verden af post-sociale medier.


I den tredje forskningsartikel, med titlen "Professional, Transmedia Selves: Finding a Place for Enterprise Social Media" (indsendt til fagfællebedømmelse), antager jeg et udvidet syn på transmedieteri for at argumentere for, hvordan enterprise sociale medier (ESM), og især Workplace from Meta, faciliterer en mulighed for digital selvpræsentation. Argumentet er, at almindelige brugere nu er castet i rollen som transmedieproducenter, som skal finde ud af, hvilket unikt bidrag ESM kan give. Kapitlet fortsætter derefter med at skitsere tre individuelle casestudier af, hvordan integrationen af ESM’et Workplace fra Facebook kan udvikle sig. De forskellige cases illustrerer, hvordan overvejelser om både selvpromovering, medborgerskab på arbejdspladsen eller brug af ESM's legende funktioner både kan tilskynde til brug og i sidste ende marginalisere mediet i arbejderens personlige transmedieøkologi.

I den fjerde forskningsartikel, med titlen "Overcoming Forced Disconnection: Disentangling the Professional and the Personal in Pandemic Times" (udgivet i antologien Reckoning with Social Media, red. Aleena Chia, Ana Jorge og Tero Karppi), medforfattet med Stine Lomborg, vender jeg mig imod spørgsmålet om, hvilken rolle Workplace spiller, når arbejdspladsen forsvarer. Ved at analysere de interviews, der blev gennemført under det første højdepunkt af COVID-19-
pandemien, undersøger vi, hvilken rolle Workplace menes at spille under de på det tidspunkt ekstraordinære omstændigheder, som nedlukningen medførte. Her tyder beviserne på, at Workplaces fatiske kommunikative muligheder var sekundære i forhold til mere "levende" kommunikationsformer. Derudover repræsenterede COVID-19-lockdowns et tydeligt eksempel på arbejde, der migrerede ind i domænet af de personlige, potentielt eroderende tidsmæssige, rumlige og sociale grænser undervejs. Under disse omstændigheder var Workplace ikke blot et medie, der var "vandret" fra det personlige til det professionelle liv. Det professionelle liv var nu uundgåeligt kastet sig ind i det personlige. Ud over at give flere eksempler på forhandlingerne om, hvilken form for kommunikation Workplace skal fremme, illustrerer denne artikel også vanskeligheden ved at stole på dette medie for fællesskab på arbejdspladsen, især under omstændigheder, hvor arbejdslivet blev særligt afhængig af digitale medier.

I den femte og sidste forskningsartikel med titlen "An organisational cultivation of digital resignation? Enterprise social media, privacy, and autonomy" (udgivet i Nordicom Review 42(s4)), diskuterer jeg, hvordan enterprise sociale medier (ESM) stort set er blevet ignoreret i diskussioner om dataficeringspraksisser på sociale medieplatforme. Jeg præsenterer et første skridt i retning af at udfylde dette forskningshul. Mit forskningsspørgsmål i denne artikel vedrører, hvordan medarbejdere i virksomheder, der bruger ESM’et Workplace fra Facebook, føler, at implementeringen af denne særlige platform relaterer sig til deres potentielle kampe for digitalt privatliv og segmentering af arbejdsliv. Metodisk udforsker jeg dette gennem en kvalitativ interviewundersøgelse af 21 danske vidensarbejdere i forskellige organisationer, der anvender Workplace from Meta. Artiklens centrale analytiske forslag er, at interviewpersonerne udtrykker en "digital resignation" over for implementeringen af ESM. I modsætning til tidligere diskussioner kan denne fratræden ikke kun opfattes som "virksomhedsdyrket" af tredjeparter, men skal også betragtes som "organisatorisk dyrket" af de organisationer, folk arbejder for. Undersøgelsen foreslår, at dataficerings-orienterede mediestudier bør overveje organisatoriske sammenhænge.
# Appendix: Interview Guide

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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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| Personal Background        | First, I’d like to hear about your personal background and status  
- Your age  
- Family situation (Relationship status? Children?)  
- Education  
- A brief summary of your career until now  
- What can you tell me about what you do everyday (your current job)  
- How much do you separate your workplace and your personal life (different devices, home offices, distances)  
- Do you have a dedicated working spot at your work? |
| Situating the Person in the Organization | - Can you tell me about the organization you work for?  
- How much of your organization |
| Workplace as Project       | - Can you recall when you first heard about Workplace from Facebook? (In your organization or elsewhere)  
- What do you recall thinking about it then  
- [If interviewee was involved in implementing Workplace] why did you end up choosing Workplace?  
- [If interviewee was involved in implementing Workplace] What did you hope to achieve by implementing Workplace? |
| Workplace in practice | - What do you recall about the process of creating a user on Workplace?  
- How do you use Workplace in your everyday work?  
- Which colleagues would you say you use Workplace to contact and why?  
- Are you a member of any groups in your company's Workplace?  
- Have you posted anything to Workplace, if so what?  
- Do you believe Workplace has replaced any previous communications means you had? If so, which?  
- When would you prefer to use other communications channels than Workplace and why? |
| Being Introduced to Workplace in your organization | - Was Workplace a part of your organization become you were onboarded?  
- How were you introduced to Workplace in your organization?  
- Which other communications media do you use the most in your organization?  
- How was it explained to you what you should use Workplace for, as opposed to any of those other media? |
| Personal Configuration of Workplace | - When would you like to check Workplace during the day?  
- What device do you use to access Workplace?  
- Do you check Workplace in the evenings? On weekends? On holidays or vacations?  
- When do you think other people should check or post to Workplace? |
| Personal Media Environment | In this section, I will mention a number of media platforms and ask you about whether or not you use them, and if so how. I am particularly interested in what you use them for, and what you would prefer to use them for.  
- Phones (for conversations)  
- Texts messages  
- Twitter  
- LinkedIn  
- Instagram |
**Workplace as a Platform overall**
- In an abstract sense, what do you believe are the advantages of your organization's choice to use Workplace?
- In the abstract, what do you believe are the disadvantages of your organization's choice to use Workplace?
- Are there any concrete events that come to mind when you think about these advantages and disadvantages?

**Facebook [Meta] as a company**
- Do you have any opinions about Facebook as a company?
- This could be about their branding.
- Any news stories you might have heard about them.
- What do you know about their business models and practices?
- Do you have any ensuing thoughts about Facebook (not Workplace) as a platform?
- In light of your previous answers, do you have any thoughts about it being Facebook [Meta] delivering a communications solution [Workplace] to your organization?

**Conclusion**
- Has anything come to mind during the interview which you would like to discuss further or clarify?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- How would you say the experience of having been interviewed has been?