



# UTBLICK



A MAGAZINE  
ABOUT FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES

ISSUE no. 3 2018

## New Media

THE  
AUTHORITARIAN  
HANDBOOK

FIGHTING ALGORITHM  
WITH ALGORITHM

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION  
IN DECLINE



Utrikespolitiska  
föreningen  
Göteborg



# 🚩 EDITORS LETTER

UTBLICK is back again after the summer  
with a fresh new issue about MEDIA

**Recent events** have made us wonder about which changes media will go through in the near future (digital revolution?). Since cases such as Snowden's whistle-blow or Cambridge Analytica, how much do we know about how the data we provide and the data we receive is being handled? Furthermore, could the current state of a decentralized and extremely rapid flow of information have any consequences with practices like biohacking?

But we should not forget the people behind technology, and for instance, how the information is being moderated outside of algorithms; who are the people behind the reporting button?

This leads us to social media and how we interact with it; from the narcissistic use of social media to the unconsented recording of Korean women in public spaces. And also fake news, a term that has come up and been discussed all over during the last couple of years. But what exactly is fake news and how does it affect you? We hope you can find some answers with the specific case of Macedonia and how fake news managed to disband the country's renaming referendum.

We also want to build your hopes up with a very inspiring interview with Swedish news reporter Carina Bergfeldt and her thoughts on the journalistic career, the current politics and how has she managed to do some amazing things such as reporting the KKK from within.

We should also be aware of the role of the more conventional media, by some cases such as Singapore and LGBT rights, performative violence and its treatment by the conventional media and lastly, Spain and its controversial freedom of expression. And on a bigger trend, the turn to illiberalism in democracies. So, to wrap it up, you will be able to find an "authoritarian handbook" :)

We wish you a very pleasant read,

The editors,  
Moa Persson and Ariadna Carrascosa



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They get rid of online trash

# - The Moderators behind Social Media

**7,500. That's the number of moderators working for Facebook as of 2018. You know, they are the people in charge of checking the data posted on social media based on the rules of each platform. Those who work on what someone, maybe you at some point, reported as being inappropriate or harmful.**

Those who have to approve or reject pictures of nipples, war scenes, naked children, wounded cats, and mass murders – day after day. Last May, Facebook held its first Content Summit in Paris. The point was to address criticisms regarding the company's content management, and it turned out to be an attempted transparency operation regarding its moderation rules. During the event, several spectacular figures were laid out one after the other. Let's pick just a few of them. 2.2 billion: the number of active users (monthly). Over 1 billion: the number of pictures being posted (daily).

Now, let's get back to the first figure presented in this article: 7,500 content moderators. Put differently, in 2018, there are 7,500 people in charge of moderating virtually a billion pictures per day. In an investigation led in India last year, the online magazine Field of Vision found a small company that is part of Facebook's moderation system. The executive officer of this company also had a figure worth mentioning: 2,000 photos per hour. That's, on average, the number of pictures his employees need to assess.

A quick calculation tells us this mind-blowing fact: each of these moderators has one second, two maximum, to decide whether a picture is acceptable or not.

That is something those who are hired to do the job are well aware of. They are told early in their training that they can't make "even a single mistake, because it will (have an) impact", as quot-

ed by the Field of Vision report in India. For the brand new moderators in this specific company, this job is actually their first one ever – and as soon as they start they are told that they have to be "very good at judging, understanding the things" they see one second after the other.

In 2017, The Guardian published a powerful investigation on how the small hands in charge of cleaning social media were "overburdened". Facebook had to answer to this criticism at the 2018 Content Summit as well, but its spokesperson at the event, Monika Bickert, refused to give any details on the moderators' work conditions. She justified this silence by invoking "security reasons". But she admitted that although Facebook itself has not implemented any mandatory quotas for its moderation companies, their employees are nonetheless assessed every week... based on the number of pictures they processed.

In the same logic, Bickert refused to reveal the places these people work from, and who exactly they work for. Are they Facebook employees? Subcontractors? Both? In which proportions? All

**each of these moderators  
has one second,  
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whether a picture  
is acceptable or not.**

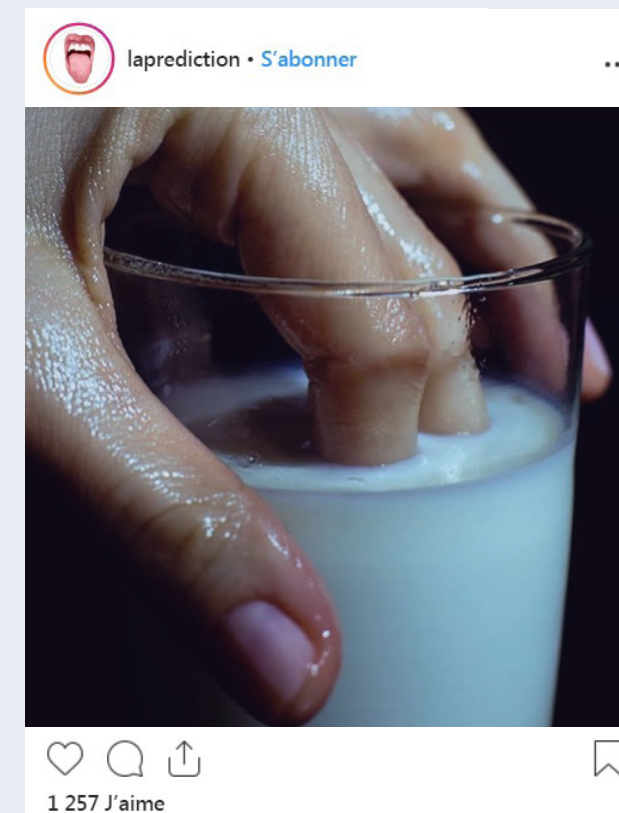
she conceded was that "most" moderators operate from the US, Ireland, Germany, and India. But when it comes to the rights of these workers, the answers to all the questions that remain about their location and status are paramount. Keep-

ing them blurred doesn't exactly help Facebook improve its image in term of social responsibility.

Another point that needs to be questioned in the moderators' work conditions is the one of the impact such hails of pictures have on them as human beings – especially when we think of the very type of pictures likely to be reported for assessment. Psychological studies are unequivocal: being frequently exposed to violent or extreme images increases the risk of depression, distress, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

The young moderators in India were warned: "you will see very offensive stuff, sometimes very disturbing... Be mentally prepared for your job!" Yet Facebook claims all these people have the right to ask not to deal with a specific kind of content. How does the firm ensure that this right is respected

**"spokesperson at the event, Monika Bickert, refused to give any details on the moderators' work conditions. She justified this silence by invoking "security reasons"**



Post from the instagram account "laprediction", 2017  
Translation by Chloé Lhote-Bérogin

**The young moderators  
in India were warned:  
"you will see very offensive  
stuff, sometimes very  
disturbing... Be mentally  
prepared for your job!"**

in all the mysterious locations hosting its moderators, though? The evasive elements provided at the Content Summit leave that unanswered. Unanswered, also, are the problems potentially posed not by the picture, but by the text that goes with it. Instagram especially, owned by Facebook, is full of examples of this kind. A harmless one is the one of the French account "La Prédiction", an account posting poetic and erotic texts along with very innocent images. The rate at which moderators are expected to do their job comes into play there as well. It is one thing to leave online a paragraph with a sexual, but artistic, connotation. Leaving online a text calling for hate crimes or terrorist acts, is on a completely different level. But if such writings come with pictures of kittens, they are likely to go unnoticed for a bit longer than a photo revealing a nipple.

**laprediction Nouvelle n°2: Le Plateau**  
Je sentis ses doigts glisser entre mes  
jambes, et tandis qu'il ouvrait mon  
pantalon, la chaleur de sa peau pénétrait  
dans ma petite culotte. Alors que ses lèvres  
arrachaient ma bouche, sa  
main venait retirer à ma chatte sa lave  
chaleureuse. Ses doigts fondaient comme  
neige au soleil, et mon corps tout entier se  
lissait emporter.

**"I felt his fingers softly caress  
my thighs, and as he was taking  
off my pants my panties were  
suffused by the warmth of his skin. He  
kissed me fiercely  
while his fingers  
set my pussy on fire.  
His hand started melting like snow  
in the sun and my entire body  
was losing control."**

# Fighting Algorithm with Algorithm

**By the time you have finished your morning coffee, made the kids ready for school or even just the time it takes you to read this article, all of your social media networks have already constructed, from millions of possible variations, what content you will be seeing there that day.**

From news, specifically selected from your own stance on the political spectrum to what adverts will most appeal to you in order to get you to buy something you never even considered before. All of this is based around a social networks own algorithm, a series of codes which gives the user a 'Hyper-Personalised' experience.

In recent years Public Interest API's (Application Programming Interfaces) have become a topic which consistently come up when discussing social media and its effects on society, both socially and perhaps more alarmingly in the interest of a democratic process. Many companies are trying to introduce Public Interest API's, a separate software practice, which would integrate within Social media and provide some transparency as to when you are being profiled for content and targeted by the algorithm itself. Making websites like Facebook a broader spectrum of information for the user.

It has been questioned by social media companies as to whether this practice would conflict with a user's privacy, although Tom Wheeler of the Centre For Technology Innovation states that the process "doesn't open the algorithm itself, or the privacy protections of users, but it does capture select inputs and outputs", which directly contra-

dicts the opinion which is being released to the public by social media outlets.

**All of this is based // around a social networks own algorithm, a series of codes which gives the user a 'Hyper-Personalised' experience.**

Pressure for the integration of Public Interest API's comes from reports that democratic processes around the world are being directly affected as a result of these algorithms. Suspected Russian influence in the U.S. Presidential Election and Cambridge Analytica's manipulation using the data of 87 million users during the UK referendum which prompted Brexit are two of the main examples where social media scandals have been prominent. Although, this has paved the way for further investigations worldwide.

Tom Wheeler goes on to say "algorithms deliver only what they want you to see, creating silos of prejudices and preferences that tear at the collective fabric required for a representative democracy". And elaborating on the political positivity of Social media transparency says, "such sunlight will not only expose any propaganda, but also will help independent evaluation of the veracity of the information being delivered".

Obviously, the repercussions of the implementation go beyond the monitoring of political events, this would have a huge impact on day to day life. Public Interest API's would stop 'Fake news' being targeted to isolate a certain demographic of people from another and micro-targeted advertisements would stop attributing to the mental health crisis which has been shown to be a direct result of social media manipulation.

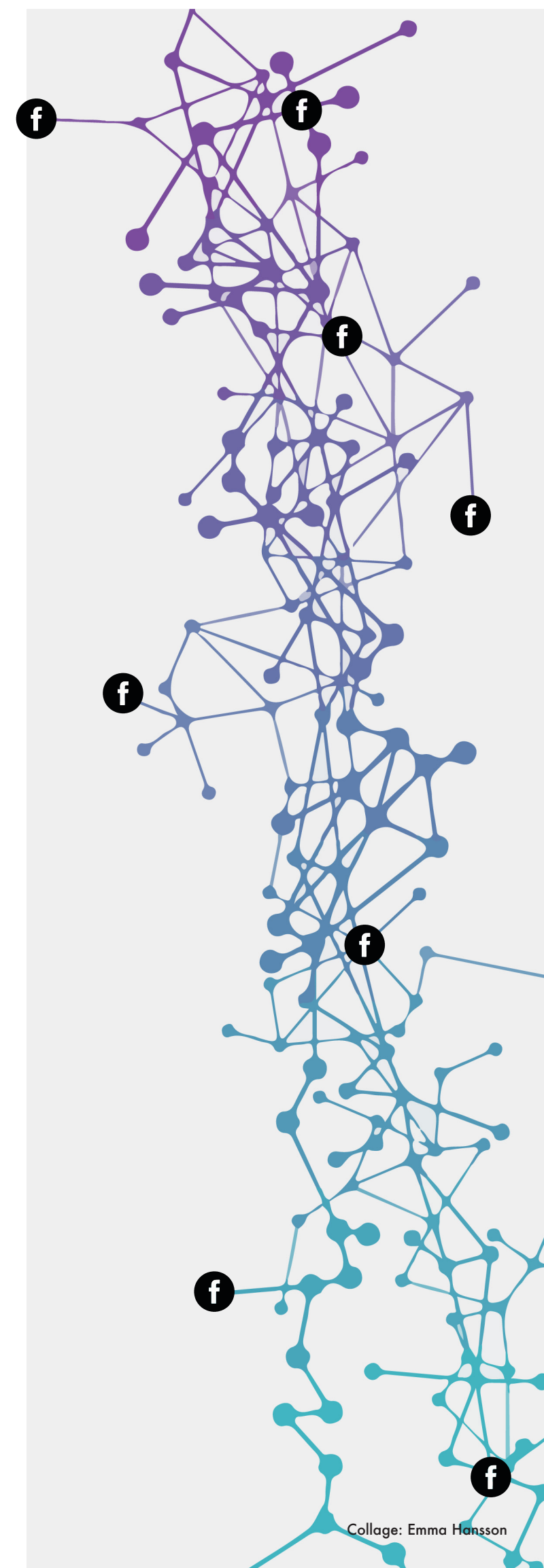
**// As social media scandals become the norm, though the one's responsible, as of yet have faced few serious penalties.**

In fact, in a 2017 investigation by The Australian, leaked documents showed that an Australian company was assured by Facebook executives that they could target adverts for them, based on the psychological insights of 6.4 million teenagers obtained by its algorithm. Stating that they knew when teenagers felt "defeated, overwhelmed, stressed, anxious, nervous, stupid, silly, useless and like a failure".

Following the news reports, Facebook, of course, refuted the claim, but then released a statement days later stating that they would "conduct an investigation into the matter". Admitting "it was inappropriate to target young children in such a way".

As social media scandals become the norm, though the one's responsible, as of yet have faced few serious penalties. Facebook, only last week released that over 50 million accounts had been hacked, there were cries from some within the U.S senate pleading for judicial intervention, with Senator Mark Warner, a Democrat from Virginia stating "This is another sobering indicator that Congress needs to step up and take action to protect the privacy and security of social media users". Given that Facebook and other social media outlets have maintained that they will not accept a public interest API within their platform, it seems the only way to make this a reality is through legal obligation.

With calls for investigations into, and potential reforms for all social media platforms, it seems that the solution of public interest API's is already staring us in the face.





# Biohacking

## The untested Future

**Biohacking. A term so broad it can refer to activities such as trying a new diet or inserting a microchip into your hand to serve as company ID.**

As of 2017 the term can also be used when referring to someone injecting themselves with a homemade gene therapy intended to cure Herpes in front of a live audience, and broadcasting it on social media.

Almost all biohacking is what is called DIY biohacking, conducted by mostly amateur biologists, or citizen scientists, running experiments on themselves and their friends in in-home or small scale laboratories. The main reason for these DIY labs is to circumvent the rigorous testing and well established protocols of mainstream science. DIY biohacking started to gain popularity after an article was published in Make magazine in 2006, and since then the bond between media and biohacking has only strengthened. Being a niche practice full of intense individuals the obvious channels of Reddit threads and online forums are a huge part of the online community but this article will be looking at other ways media is being and has been used in the biohacking community.

The first example of this is the live broadcast of a gene therapy injection at the Body Hacking Con in Austin last February. Aaron Traywick, the founder and CEO of Ascendance Biomedical, a biohacking company, created a gene therapy using DIY methods. An experimental technique that uses genes to prevent or treat disease. Traywick, who had the Herpes virus created this particular gene therapy with the goal of preventing and even curing the disease. As he injected himself in front of a live audience and a video camera he said to the audience "If we succeed with herpes in even the most minor ways, we can proceed with cancer".

In the following months Aaron Traywick's gene therapy proved not to be effective and his brash, attention seeking behavior caused Ascendance Biomedical to fall apart and Traywick to be ostracized from his network of bio-hackers, before he died of a Ketamine overdose in April this year. One bio-hacker previously working with Traywick and Ascendance Biomedical, Tristan Roberts, said he and other bio-hackers wanted to "eliminate" Traywick from the biohacking community before he "hurts people".

Although many of the popular names in biohacking are active online, the way Aaron Traywick was using social media to broadcast his stunts and create a buzz around his company went against the ethics and unwritten codes of conduct within the biohacking community. Fellow biohackers felt like Traywick was adding to the fuel of the public's image of reckless, mad-scientists. In response to a Gizmodo article<sup>1</sup> about Traywick's stunt in Austin, one long time bio-hacker said "These stunts make old-school biohackers/self-experimenters (like me) look like ignorant fools."

In the above example the internet and media content on the internet caused a wedge to be driven into the community of biohackers at one of the most prominent DIY biology startups. However,

**DIY biohacking, conducted by mostly amateur biologists, or citizen scientists, running experiments on themselves and their friends in in-home or small scale laboratories**

Lewis Day

the internet has proven to also be a place that has managed to cultivate relationships between those interested in DIY science and establish a strong network. Although biohackers are mostly working outside of government regulations - testing on themselves and not publishing in peer reviewed journals - there is still an unwritten ethical code upheld by most of those in the field, and the labs still employ best practice measures when conducting experiments. To help create a network of like-minded DIY amateur scientists and biohacking labs diybio.org created the DIY biosphere<sup>2</sup>.

**In his lab Grushkin runs 'biohacking boot camps' where he introduces people to DIY biology**

An interactive map of the world with information about dozens and dozens of biohacking labs and events operating throughout the world. One of these labs is Genspace, run by Daniel Grushkin, a prominent figure and poster boy for large scale, legitimate, safe biohacking labs. In his lab Grushkin runs 'biohacking boot camps' where he introduces people to DIY biology. As The Independent said

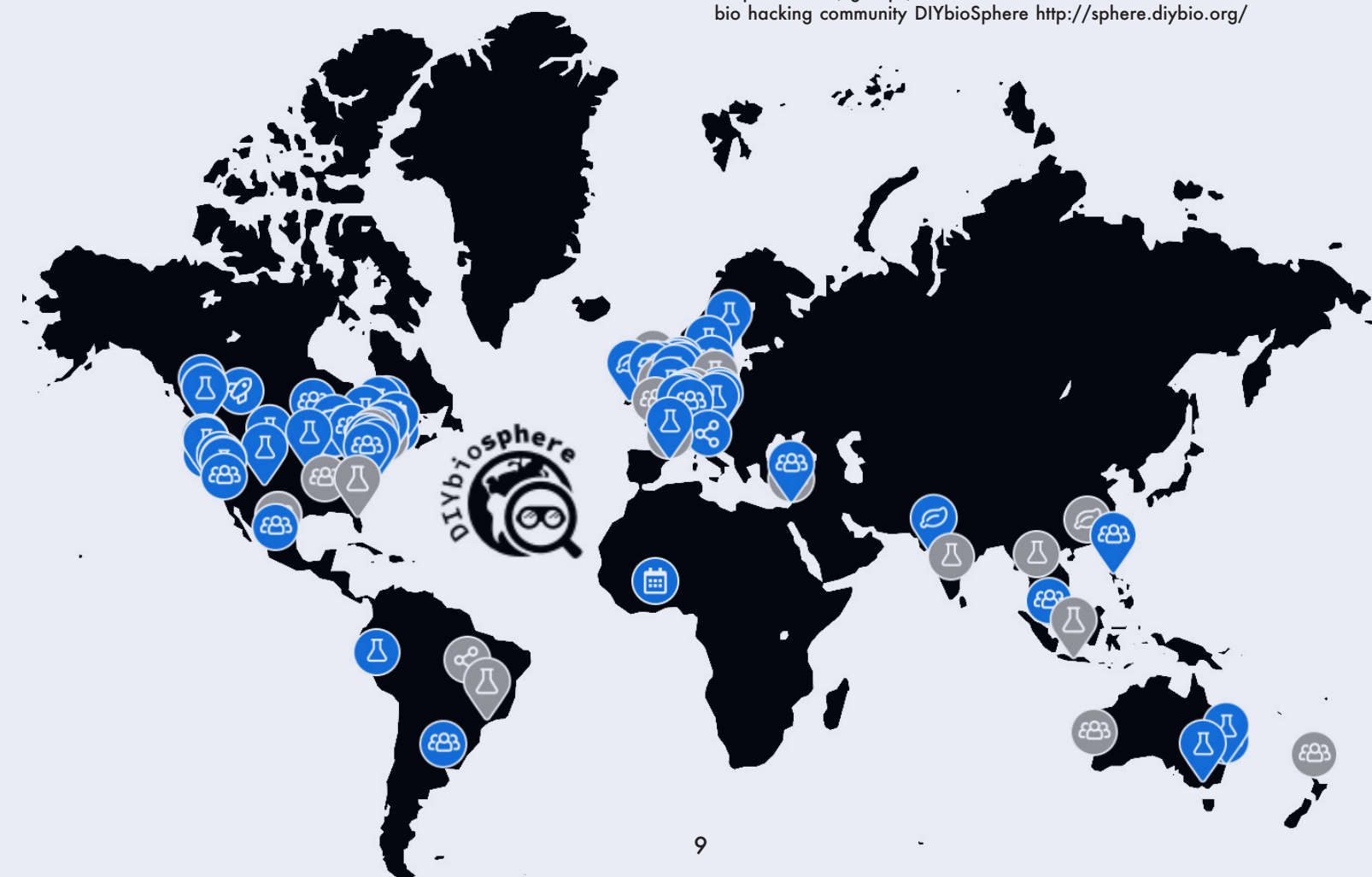
"he has posted community guidelines, forbidden infectious agents in the lab, and accepted a grant of almost \$500,000 (USD) to design security practices for some four dozen similar labs."

Although DIY biohacking labs or biohackers themselves haven't yet caused harm to the general public, or put them at risk of any serious danger there is still widespread concern for the future, and not just in amateur science labs. Keoni Gandall, a research fellow at Stanford University said "Even I would tell you, the level of DNA synthesis regulation, it simply isn't good enough. These regulations aren't going to work when everything is decentralised - when everybody has a DNA synthesiser on their smartphone." Gandall is referring to the natural or artificial creation of gene sequences that is becoming a hot topic among scientists, particularly those in the immunology and bio-security fields.

A legitimate science lab, full of legitimate scientists in Alberta, Canada used DNA strands they ordered on the internet to complete a synthesis of a formerly extinct cousin of smallpox, Horsepox. Not only did they recreate this potentially devastating poxvirus but they gave step by step instructions of their process and even troubleshooting tips for synthesising similar viruses in a paper that was published in PLOS One in January of 2018.

The large scientific journal PLOS One released a statement accompanying the paper stating that

Map over labs, groups, networks etc. that are connected to the bio hacking community DIYbioSphere <http://sphere.diybio.org/>




**CINEMA POLITICA**  
SCREENING TRUTH TO POWER


**Folkuniversitetet**


**Utrikespolitiska  
föreningen  
Göteborg**


**culturesofresistance** FILMS


**GÖTA  
STUDENTKÅR**

# FILM FESTIVAL: VARIETIES OF IDENTITIES



## 6 and 7 November 2018 16.00 - 19.00

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**Full schedule on  
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**FREE ENTRANCE**



Online there's a variety of DIY CRISPR Kits that can be purchased

Illustrations: Emma hansson

they had assessed the risk of publishing the information in paper with their Dual Use Research Committee and determined that "the benefits of publication outweigh the risks". Many scientists in the community were extremely concerned by a perceived lack of disregard for biosafety from PLOS One in publishing the paper. Especially as before it was published a report from the World Health Organisation said the that the venture "did not require exceptional biochemical knowledge or skills, significant funds or significant time".

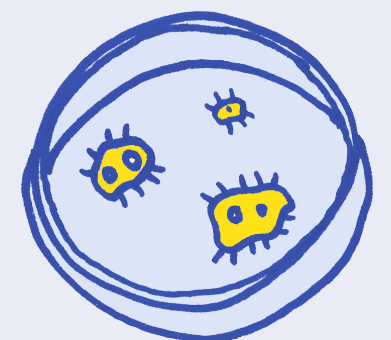
Although the level of technology and funding is much greater in the case of professional science labs this

// the agency mainly relies on biohackers to alert the FBI of any suspicious behaviour going on in their labs

kind of information coupled with increasingly accessible technology could give biohackers the tools to create an infectious poxvirus using the same gene editing techniques they are already practicing. This is particularly concerning considering the lack of government regulation in biohacking labs. William

So, a bio security expert at the FBI had this to say when speaking to The Independent, "there really isn't a national governance per se for those who are not federally or government funded." Instead he says the agency mainly relies on biohackers to alert the FBI of any suspicious behaviour going on in their labs.

With any field in this day and age, particularly a new and growing one media plays a giant role in its expansion. Biohacking is no exception. Whether it is through potentially poorly thought out marketing ideas, well-constructed community networks or open access to new information in legitimate science publications, media and technology are helping biohacking to move forward at a fast pace. Enabling citizen science to strengthen and develop, for better or worse.





# The Narcissistic Structure of **Desire** within Social Media

5th century BC  
Greece:

Zeuxis and Parrhasius, two of the best painters of their time enter a competition to determine who is the true master of their arts. In some sort of duel, both are asked to create a painting as realistic as possible which the present jury will later on evaluate. After removing the veil in front of his masterpiece, it becomes obvious: Parrhasius managed to draw a bush with such detailed and realistic berries that birds fly by and try to pick them. Zeuxis however has his painting still covered by a veil. Upon this, Parrhasius approaches Zeuxis' painting to remove the veil. At this very moment he realizes his loss, the assumed veil precisely was the painting.

18th century AD  
Naples:

Don Alvaro (protagonist in Jacques Cazottes novel *The Devil in Love*), a young captain of Naples king's guard and member of an aristocratic family is out partying with his friends. As the night proceeds, he finds himself alone with a stranger he just met: Soberano. The latter tells Don Alvaro that he is able to summon spirits. Don Alvaro is fascinated by this ability and wants to summon the devil himself. After a demanding, complex and mysterious ritual Don Alvaro is finally able to do so. The devil appears in the form of a camel's head asking Don Alvaro: Che Vuoi? (What do you want?)

21st century AD  
California, US:

Phil Schiller, Apple's vice-president of marketing, enters the stage of Apple's Keynote event (Steve Jobs Theater, Apple Park campus, September 2018). The presented and spectacular new iPhone Xs that accompanies everything one may 'desire': battery, screen, processor, graphic processing, camera and so on are not merely better than before, they are the best among all iPhone devices, ever. Its partial composition of "bio-based materials" and the supply of all Apple services with 100% renewable energy are "a huge win for the planet".

Maximilian Weik

## So what?

These three events, may they be historic, fictional or contemporary are accompanied by a driving question of everyday struggle: what does one desire?

What one desires is nowadays not only approachable through psychoanalytic practice or through 'knowing' oneself. Who one wants to be and how one wants to be seen is also externalized and accessible through social media. E.g. Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook. This, in the first place highly individual practice in the area of conflict between conformity and emancipation, seems to be a service that is free in terms of money but expensive when it comes to revealing personal data. But it is likewise a highly collective and interdependent political struggle. How the global and normative orders are structured and reflected into the realm of social media and what is at stake became recently obvious (#CambridgeAnalytica #Metoo #Twitterbot). Social media may be highly discussed and tried to be explained by new theoretical frames acknowledging this new condition, but a likewise interesting explanation may lay in the past.

Jacques Lacan, an influential psychoanalyst of the 20th century developed a set of complex assumptions about the subject's psyche as well as the subject's desire, mainly through psychoanalytic theory and practice but also by revising Freud. According to Lacan, three cornerstones compose human psyche. First *the symbolic*, so to say the realm of language. A word functions as a *signifier* that gives meaning to its counterpart, the *signified*. This is anyhow a pluralistic relation. A certain *signifier* signifies several *signified* while the *signified* itself is again a *signifier* for something else. The *signified* glides underneath the *signifier* and is opposed to a constant individual and societal struggle (read: political). Because language can never be on point or precise, according to Lacan the subject is split. Second, *the imaginary* may be the realm of the body. The body is of great importance for the subject by presenting the borders between who I am and who *the other* is. Emerged by the traumatic experience of recognizing oneself in a mirror, Lacan developed the concept of the *mirror stage*. Through experiencing oneself in a mirror, the toddler (likewise the

# Che Vuoi?

Camel / the devil  
Photo by CC0 via Canva Stockphoto

'regular' social media user) falls in love with itself. Being witnessed by another person (*the other*) and the later development of language, *the symbolic* is inflicting *the imaginary*: I want to be like mom (dad, friend, teacher, boss, neighbor, professor or celebrity) but I also do not want to be like them. This unanswerable question is therefore structuring the subject's *narcissistic state*. Important to mention is that narcissism for Lacan is not a pathological diagnosis but a 'normal' condition of human psyche. Fundamental for this is the emerging question: how am I perceived? Third, *the real* is precisely what can not be expressed by neither *the symbolic* nor *the imaginary*. *The real* can not be identified, *the imaginary* and *the symbolic* are circulating around it and as soon as *the real* is grasped, *the real* vanishes. Just like Zeuxis' painting from the perspective of Parrhasius.

According to Lacan, the subject's *desire* is not directed towards a specific object (e.g. housing, wealth, certificates or their asceticism) but it's imposed by *the Other*. Further, the subject's desire is always the *desire of the Other*, which is not a person but rather an ideological state apparatus (e.g. norms, laws or moral). Just like the camel-head-shaped devil asking Don Alvaro: Che Vuoi? (What do you want?)

Are social media platforms therefore so important because they are so coherent with the human psyche when it comes to imaginary content (pictures and emojis) and symbolical content (comments and hashtags) that are circulating around something? Maybe. What can 'we' learn

from a psychoanalytic perspective on social media that 'we' didn't already know before? One can try to observe and reconstruct the historical change regarding the *desire of the Other*: a classical *Other* in

**Are social media platforms // so important because they are so coherent with the human psyche when it comes to imaginary content (pictures & emojis) and symbolical content (comments & hashtags) that are circulating around something?**

'the west' may be God and s/he has been spectacularly replaced by the metaphysics of capitalism. But also the later is not resistant to change since a new source of power within the societal field is on the rise: personal information / data.

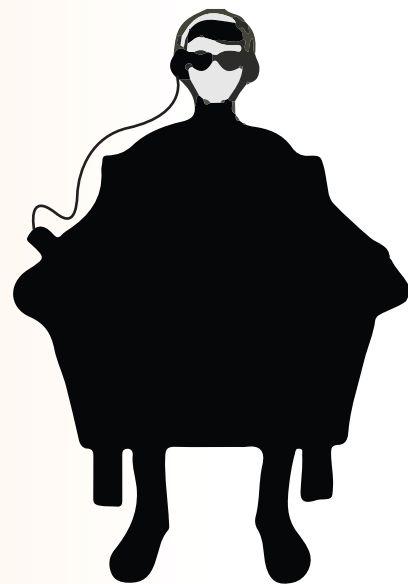
The presence of the postmodern phenomena in late capitalism may be the individualistic and hedonistic subjectivation that itself transgresses through the borders of the public and private life, where the big narratives of previous centuries (religion, national state or economy) seems to be deconstructed. Anyway, to approach what *the Other* wants from someone in a societal context that is embedded in social media, one could try to answer for 'oneself' while using social media the next time: Che Vuoi?





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## South Korea's Women Gathered against Spy Cameras



Women Rally Against Hidden Cameras, August 2018 in Seoul, South Korea  
Photo by Jean Chung via Getty Images

Moa Persson

**Spy cameras are hidden all over in public toilets and the subway in South Korea. In July this year, over 18,000 women gathered on the streets of Seoul to protest on the problem with molka, spy cameras. Through small holes poked in walls the spy cameras record women going to the bathroom and the films often end up on pornography sites.**

The protest got together under the hashtag **#MyLifelsNotYourPorn** and was the biggest female-only march in South Korean history and has now become a monthly protest.

Spy cameras are hidden in shoes, body lotions and in holes in public bathroom walls, filming women going to the bathroom or trying to film up-skirts, trying to produce secretly recorded pictures and videos of women in public spaces for pornography. The protests against malka all started in May, when a 25-year old woman got arrested for secretly taking a photo of a male colleague and then uploaded it online. Leaving the general population of women asking whether the police actually care when the hidden-camera issue is directed to women or if its only relevant to arrest the person who conducted the crime when the target was a man - something that is very rare. In the latest march taking place in the beginning of october, people arrived with signs saying stuff like "Don't come to Korea, your young daughter can be a porn star" and "The places of korean spy cam = in your lodging, glasses, toilet = Everywhere!". In an article published in The Telegraph in September, the organizers behind the biggest women's march say there has been a huge backlash to the organizers saying that they have been forced to leave their jobs and need to keep their identification anonymous for the fear of acid attacks. The country has had a history with this kind pornography over the years and many people now feel that the government is not able to deal with the perpetrators who use the spy cameras or smart phones to film under women's clothing or try to record films by secretly

showing their genitals. As they only get small fines and this creates an environment in which women constantly worry about small hidden cameras in public bathrooms or being filmed from under their skirt at the subway.

The problem with women's lack of privacy in public spheres made the government take action in 2004, making the phone companies selling mobile phones in the country to have a feature installed not allowing the turning off of the camera shutter sound. This was an action to protect people's privacy and for the government to show they were acting on the problem.

**Spy cameras are hidden  
in shoes, body lotions  
and in holes in public  
bathroom walls, filming women  
going to the bathroom or trying  
to film up-skirts, to produce  
material for pornography**

In South Korea, internet censorship is similar to developed countries, except the part including a ban on pornography. A law that is loosely applied to many websites and social media, a forum where many people get their porn. Recently, the social media platform Tumblr agreed to cooperate with the South Korean government in censoring pornography on their website in South Korea.

With the attention the government pays to censoring pornography women feel that their calls for change regarding the molka are not being listened to. Add to this the fact that when a woman takes a photo of a man she is prosecuted and not when the opposite happens. There may however, be more to face than just the government for the monthly protesters going forward, as the backlash they receive is only mounting.





# The Ills of Mediatized Perceptions: The Macedonian Example

**The concept of autonomy denotes self-government, the ability of one to make decisions about themselves independently of external influences. It was upon this concept that the Treaty of Westphalia was signed in 1648 to establish and recognize states and their sovereignty. Perceptions in media, particularly social media, have arguably affected state's ability to be autonomous in their political affairs.**

The name change referendum failure in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is a fitting case study that portrays the dangers of social media perceptions on state autonomy in democratic societies where internet access is not an issue. The referendum scheduled for September 30, 2018 was the glare of hope in solving a



Supporters of the movement to boycott the referendum vote September 2018 in Skopje, Macedonia  
Photo by Chris McGrath via Getty Images

**Toni-Marie Cornwall**  
27 year long dispute with Greece over the country's name. Greece has claimed that the name Macedonia belongs to the historical region in its northern province and has blocked the country's

**Fake news spreading  
propaganda about the  
illegality of the referendum,  
hate speeches, organized trolls,  
hashtags and memes that constantly  
poured out on social media  
skewed perceptions, discouraged  
and at times enraged citizens.**

attempt to join NATO and the EU because of this name conflict. The referendum was to present a name change to The Republic of Northern Macedonia which was approved by Greece and that would allow the country's accession into the EU and NATO. However opposers of the referendum used social media as a manipulation tool to get citizens to boycott the referendum.

Over 3 billion people are social media users. In this space of free space of expression and global integration, people from all walks of life have the ability to share their opinions openly in matters that they would not have been able to before. It brings world affairs into the intimacy of personal chats and sovereign matters under the influence of global social perception. Prior to the referendum date, the hashtag #Бojкотирам (boycott) emerged on twitter generating over 24,000 mentions and 20,000 retweets. Additionally, false information about the referendum continuously flooded news

feeds. Even further, there were approximately 40 new facebook pages emerging everyday that spread the message of boycott across the platform. This deliberate disinformation campaign was helped by the fact that government initiatives such as 'Macedonia Connects' and 'Fresh Air and Free Internet' had paved the way for increased internet access across the country years before. This proliferation of ideas propelled this platform into a battle for audience like being in a room filled with people where everyone is talking. This exposed a lot of citizens to the possibility of being influenced by these disinformation campaigns and proved



2016 in Skopje, Macedonia  
Photo by Maximilian von Lachner/NurPhoto via Getty Images

successful in its effort to boycott the referendum as less than 50 percent of the electorate voted, making the referendum not legally binding.

As a tool for political manipulation, the platform of social media facilitated perceptions that harmed the country's ability to perform the simple democratic task of voting on its own referendum. The issue with the referendum was not how the people voted, since almost 91 percent voted yes to the change, but rather how many people did not vote. The right to vote is the right to legally decide and to express the opinions of the citizens in regards to the future of their country. Since this decision was aborted by the citizens, the parliament will now have to choose on their behalf how to progress. Fake news spreading propaganda about the illegality of the referendum, hate speeches, organized trolls, hashtags and memes that constantly poured out on social media skewed perceptions, discouraged and at times enraged citizens.

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In this way, social media perceptions subtly removed individual's ability to think and decide for themselves, passive-aggressively dictated what decisions were to be taken and eroded the principles of democracy in general. Social media does not conform to the rules of media literacy and media accuracy since the currency of perception is free. Thus the ability of such a platform to influence, at times forcefully and subtly, state decisions is overwhelmingly alarming. Political decisions such as referendums or elections are by no means a light-hearted matter to be skewed by ill-advised and agenda-driven opinions by the 'loudest speaker' on a social media platform. These are matters that determine the ability of the country to provide employment, health benefits or security for the population and have a consequential impact on everyday ordinary lives. To respect the individual and state autonomy, such intimate matters should be critically contemplated by the citizens without the influence of hashtags or hidden agenda memes in a virtual world that are aggressively targeting their attention.



# EN INTERVJU

## med Carina Bergfeldt

Emma Smedberg

**Första dagen på journalisthögskolan i Göteborg fick hon höra att "75% utav er här inne i salen kommer att bli arbetslösa efter att ni har tagit examen. Om ni inte kan hantera det så borde ni inte vara här". Carina Bergfeldt, SVT:s utrikeskorrespondent i Washington DC sedan mars 2016, var inte en utav dem.**

I vårt samtal så kommer vi in på ett av hennes senare inlägg på Twitter där hon skriver om Brett Kavanaugh, som nu i oktober blev insvuren som den 114:e domaren i USA:s högsta domstol. Hon berättade att av 114 domare så har 108 varit vita män. Endast två utav dem har varit svarta.

**- Detta var ren statistik som du angav, men ändå blev du bemött av så mycket näthat.**

Den 17 januari 2006 när jag klev in på Aftonbladets kontor för första gången så var det ingen som informerade mig om att jag skulle bli kallade för hora och dylikt varje vecka i tio års tid. Även om det låter ganska hemskt så vänjer man sig olyckligtvis vid det allra mesta till slut.

Det som jag tycker har ändrats främst sedan jag flyttade till USA, och som jag finner fascinerande, är just den faktaresistens som de här människorna har utvecklat. I mitt inlägg på twitter så skrev jag ingenting som inte var sant, men ändå såg folk det som en attack på vita män.

Vid många tillfällen när jag har gått live i TV så har jag fått mejl direkt efteråt där det står att jag hatar Trump och att hatet lyste igenom mina ögon. Det är ju helt fel."

**- Hur orkar du hantera detta?**

Det finns inte mycket mer att göra åt det än att ibland bara bemöta det. Det var en man som svarade på inlägget om Kavanaugh som bad mig kommentera på mina teorier kring fördelningen på amerikanska fängelser, varav jag svarade: "Absolut, jag har skrivit en hel bok i ämnet".



Catarina Bergfeldt  
Private photo

**2012 vann hon Stora Journalistpriset i kategorin Årets Berättare för sitt reportage "Dagen vi aldrig glömmet" som handlade om massakern på Utöya**

**2013 blev hon utsedd till "Årets stilist" av tidningen Journalisten.**

**2015 publicerades hennes reportagebok Sju dagar kvar att leva: En berättelse om brott och dödsstraff.**

**2018 blev hon utsedd till hedersdoktor vid Umeå Universitet.**

**Detta är bara ett utdrag av hennes meriter.**

Det är ju till exempel ren fakta att ca 60% av de som har dömts till döden i Texas är svarta, medan det också är ett faktum att ca 15% av befolkningen där är svart. Då kan du antingen titta på den siffran och tänka att oj, det finns något där som är märkligt, eller så kan du dra slutsatsen att fler svarta begår fler brott än vita.

**" Jag vill inte prata om personens brott eller varför han sitter där på death row. Jag vill prata om hans sista dagar i livet. Jag vill prata om hur det är att inte ha fått röra en annan människa på flera år.**

Frågan uppstår då hur du som person väljer att se på världen. Antingen så tror du att svarta begår fler brott, eller så tror du att det kan väga in att en övervägande del av de som innehar de höga ämbetena i USA är vita och att det kan påverka att man har en tendens att döma svarta i större utsträckning, då man också har levt i USA i 240 år av bland annat slaveri och segregation. Det finns ju en överväldigande majoritet som tror på de ena medan en minoritet tror på det andra.

Tyvärr så finns det väldigt många människor som redan har bestämt sig för hur världen ser ut.

**- Vad skulle du säga är den största utmaningen som du har ställts inför med att jobba som korrespondent, och hur är det egentligen att bevaka Trumpadministrationen?**

Det svåraste med mitt arbete är att allt kan ändras så fort från dag till dag.

Till exempel så spenderade jag och min kollega dagen igår hemma hos en pappa i Montana vars son sköt ihjäl sig själv i sitt sovrum. Efter att vi hade tillbringat hela dagen tillsammans och han hade öppnat sitt hjärta för oss, så sa han till mig att den dagen som det här ska sändas, så är han rädd att Trump ska kasta ut sig något som gör att reportaget hamnar i skymundan.

Det är så viktigt för den här pappan att få sin röst hörd och där känner jag att jag står och skruvar lite på mig. För att jag vet att han har rätt.

Det är så många gånger under de år som jag har bott här i Washington DC då jag har varit tvungen att ändra i mitt schema. Jag har gått live vid ett G7-möte och sagt att alla länder är överens, allt är frid och fröjd, och sedan direkt efter så skriver

Trump på Twitter att han inte alls kommer att skriva på det här kontraktet, och då får jag gå live igen och bara säga "eller förresten...".

President Trump sätter agendan på ett sätt som är väldigt fascinerande vilket gör att allt vårt arbete påverkas. Jag har fått ställa in flera resor för att han har hamnat i något "twitterkrig" då det har ansetts som mycket viktigare.

USA är ett land med över 320 miljoner människor där alla har en historia att berätta, men de här historierna kommer inte att få bli hörda på grund av något som Trump har sagt eller ljutit om. Detta finner jag så frustrerande. Det kan göra att jag ibland känner mig mer som en reporter som är här för att bevaka Trump än en reporter som är här för att bevaka det som händer i USA.

Vi har aldrig sett en president av samma kaliber i ett demokratiskt samhälle som säger så mycket osanna saker lika ofta som Donald Trump gör. Det är ju en helt annan värld att ta hänsyn till vilket inte alls är någon kritik mot honom utan endast ett konstaterande.

**"USA är ett fantastiskt land med människor som lever i helt parallella universum"**

Jag känner dock att jag har aldrig varit en så påläst journalist som jag är nu idag. Eftersom du inte kan lita på den informationen som kommer från Vita huset så måste man hela tiden kontrollera fakta och kunna svara rätt på alla frågor. Det har varit en tendens när man inte har haft politiker som far med osanning att man har funnit allt de säger som pålitligt och därmed inte ifrågasatt dem. Det är väl något som man kan säga har varit en av de bättre sakerna med den här administrationen.

**- Om du skulle få möjligheten att få sitta ner i en timme och få intervjua presidenten själv, vad skulle du helst vilja fråga honom då?**

Jag har tänkt på den frågan ganska länge; det beror helt på hur dagen, eller hur världen, ser ut för tillfället. Problemet med en sådan person som talar så mycket osanning, i princip sex gånger om dagen, gör att det blir svårt att veta exakt vad man ska ställa för frågor.

Det hade varit intressant att bara få sitta och beta av flera av hans påståenden och fråga honom om han är medveten om att det han säger inte stämmer. Jag skulle vilja fråga om det är så att han väljer att ljuga och isåfall varför han väljer att göra det.

Man kan dock inte räkna med att man kommer att få ett ärligt svar på den frågan.





**- Vad tror du är anledningen till att människor vågar och vill öppna sig så för dig om det som de har upplevt samt står för?**

Jag har fått den frågan tidigare när jag var i Burundi, en stat i Östafrika, på ett jobb. Jag svarade då att jag tror att människor i kris känner av en hycklare på avstånd, vilket jag än idag tror är sant. Jag försöker att träffa människor som jag är genuint intresserade av.

**// Även om de var fientliga i början så förstod de till slut att jag bara ville veta**

**Som världsreporter hos Aftonbladet så var ett av Carinas uppdrag att åka runt i världen och hitta människor som hon trodde att det svenska folket ville läsa om. Under 2015 så åkte hon därför tillsammans med fotograf Stefan Mattsson till södra USA och följde Ku Klux Klan i en vecka.**

Det tog mig ett halvår att få tillgång till Ku Klux Klan då jag var tvungen att skriva under ett intyg på att jag inte var svart eller jude. Det var väldigt mycket förarbeten och telefonsamtal för att få dem att bli bekväma, men sedan fick jag ändå tillgång till dem på ett ovanligt sätt. Vi fick tillbringa tre hela dagar med dem, och de sa att de aldrig har låtit någon annan få stanna så länge. Folk brukade oftast bara få besöka en dag.

Även om de var fientliga i början så förstod de till slut att jag bara ville veta. Hur hamnade de där?

Hur resonerar de? Jag är inte ute efter att bråka med dem eller försöka omvända dem. Jag vill bara kunna förstå.

Samma sak när jag skrev boken Sju dagar kvar att leva. Jag vill inte prata om personens brott eller varför han sitter där på death row. Jag vill prata om hans sista dagar i livet. Jag vill prata om hur det är att inte ha fått röra en annan människa på flera år.

Jag vill veta hur det är för en person att fortsätta leva i det hus där ens barn gick in i sitt sovrum och sköt ihjäl sig själv med sin pappas pistol. Jag tror helt enkelt att om folk känner av ens genuinitet, så vågar de också prata.

**- Skulle du vilja skriva ytterligare en bok, och isåfall om vad?**

Det skulle definitivt bli en bok som handlar om USA. Det är ett fantastiskt land med människor som lever i helt parallella universum.

Förra sommaren 2017 så var jag till exempel i Wisconsin på ett väljarmöte (angående en ny sjukvårdsreform) med en lokal politiker, republikanen Jim Sensenbrenner, som har representerat delstaten sedan 1979. Vissa år så har folk inte ens brytt sig om att ställa upp i valet emot honom då han är så populär.

Vi stod och lyssnade på honom när han sa att han finner det obegripligt att han ska bry sig om att betala för att en kvinna ska kunna gå på någon form av graviditetsundersökning då det inte har någonting med honom att göra.

Jag skulle vilja få sitta ner med honom och bara få veta hur han tänker.

Jag skulle kunna sitta ner i fyra år och skriva böcker

er om detta lands befolkning. USA är ett så stort land fullt av spännande människor med spännande synpunkter som man bara vill grota ner sig i.

Men det finns just nu inte riktigt någon tid för det. Jag har verkligen världens roligaste jobb som dock tar upp majoriteten av min tid.

**- Efter att ha följt dig på sociala medier i ett flertal år så känns det som att det är nu på sistone som du har börjat acceptera din förmåga att berätta. Du har tidigare berättat om hur du kände dig som en bluff när du vann Stora Journalistpriset 2012 efter ditt reportage om Utöya, men att du nu på senare tid har börjat lita på din röst som journalist.**

Det har definitivt blivit bättre. Det finns en skröna om att när Marisa Tomei vann en Oscar 1993 för filmen 'My Cousin Vinny' så var det för att mannen som läste upp resultatet i kuvertet var närsynt och läste därmed fel namn. Den känslan hade jag när jag fick veta att jag hade vunnit Stora Journalistpriset. Jag trodde att de helt enkelt hade begått ett misstag.

Det var ungefär ett halvår efter att jag hade vunnit med mitt reportage om Utöya som de ringde från Journalisten och berättade att jag hade blivit tilldelad priset som "Årets stilist". Då kände jag bara att detta är helt orimligt. Hur lyckas man under loppet på ett halvår göra samma misstag två gånger där de utnämner fel person?

De svarade tillbaka att "nej, vi har inte gjort fel". Efter det så tror jag att det började ändras. Fler och fler människor började höra av sig till mig och berättade om hur de grät av mina texter och att de blev berörda av det som jag skrev.

**// USA är ett så stort land fullt av spännande människor med spännande synpunkter**

När jag tilldelades priset som "Årets stilist" så skrev Olle Josephson, professor i nordiska språk vid Stockholms universitet, en språkanalys av mina texter. Han hade gått igenom hela mitt språk och skrivit två sidor om vad som är en typisk Carina Bergfeldt-artikel. Det var det coolaste jag har varit med om; att få bekräftat att jag hade ett eget språk. Jag hade ingen aning att jag skrev på ett visst sätt, och där satt han och analyserade hur jag hade en tendens att inleda mina artiklar. Det fick mig att inse att jag hade en stil som jag aldrig har tänkt på tidigare.

Sedan har jag tillbringat 10 år av mitt liv av att försöka utveckla detta.

**- Var ser du dig själv om tio år, om du själv får välja?**

Om det är något som jag har lärt mig i livet så är det att inte planera så långt in i framtiden.

För helt plötsligt så kan telefonen ringa en dag och det är utrikeschefen på SVT som frågar om du vill flytta till USA och bli korrespondent och du svarar ja tack. Helt plötsligt så har onsdagen gått och det är fredag när du går ut från byggnaden där du har jobbat i tio år och byter världsdel.

**// "Det behövs så mycket envishet, målmedvetenhet och ett "fake it until your make it"- självförtroende. Du kommer att få göra så mycket tråkiga jobb i ett antal år innan du hamnar där du vill vara**

**- Vad skulle du vilja ge för råd till dem som befinner sig i det stadiet som du en gång var i?**

Det behövs så mycket envishet, målmedvetenhet och ett "fake it until your make it"-självförtroende.

Man kommer att få göra så mycket tråkiga jobb i ett antal år innan du hamnar där du vill vara. Det tar tid. Jag var inte alls duktig på att skriva i början, men nu har jag blivit så mycket bättre på det jag gör. Man lär sig hela tiden. Man skriver om sina ingresser hundra gånger om innan det känns rätt. Det roligaste som finns är att få bryta mot grundreglerna, men man behöver lära sig dem först för att det ska kunna bli bra.

Vi kvinnor måste sluta be om ursäkt och börja bevisa för folk att vi ska ha vår rätt. Det handlar helt enkelt också om att våga. Har man inte det självförtroendet, vilket få människor har, så får man helt enkelt låtsas att man har det. Det har faktiskt fungerat ganska bra.





# Being Gay in Singapore

Shreeya Pillai

**There has been a flurry of lobbying from people in Singapore on both sides of Section 377A of the Singapore Penal Code. The law criminalizing sex between mutually consenting men is known as Section 377 and 377A of the Penal Code in India and Singapore respectively.**

Section 377A was repealed in India on 6 September this year. This was despite strong opposition among religious groups. The laws were introduced into both states in the 1930s by the British when both countries were still British colonies. The law was previously challenged in Singapore in 2014 and later deemed constitutional by the Court of Appeal. The government's rhetoric has constantly been that Singaporean society which is one that is still 'conservative' is not ready for the law to be repealed. There has been fear that the 'Asian values' and 'traditional family unit' that pockets of Singaporeans hold on to so dearly is under threat.

There have been many Asian countries who have in recent years started to liberalize their laws with regards to LGBTQ rights. In addition to the recent example of India, Taiwan, Vietnam and parts of Japan have passed laws to recognize civil unions in recent years. Hence, one wonders what exactly constitutes these 'Asian' or 'traditional' values.

Singapore prides itself on being a secular nation. Thus, the religious views and beliefs of different groups should not play a role in policy making and in this case the repealing of the law. In comparison, India, also a secular state, enjoys diversity in beliefs and practices. It is also the birthplace of four huge religions - Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. However, despite opposition from various religious groups, the courts - independent from the parliament and civil society- decided that it was more important to uphold human rights over the preferences of people who choose to identify with different religions.

While Singapore proudly calls itself a democracy, features of the nation suggest otherwise. Freedom of expression and speech is highly restricted. The media is heavily controlled. The Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974 dictates that the print-

ing or publishing of any newspaper is not permitted unless a permit is granted by the Minister authorising the publication of said publication. As such, there are currently only two English language newspapers in circulation in Singapore, and one in each of the three other official languages. The law is especially constraining with regards to reporting on or shows which talk about LGBTQ issues. The media watchdog, the Media Development Authority, prohibits the 'promotion or glamorization of the homosexual lifestyle'. Doing so could lead to hefty fines being imposed on media organizations. What this means is that a happy, fulfilled LGBTQ character who has a good job or family support, is not allowed on television or radio broadcasts. But an LGBTQ character who may be sad, troubled, suicidal or suffering from mental disorders is acceptable. Because of these laws, shows like Modern Family, an Emmy winning American sitcom featuring a happy gay couple with an adopted child have never been aired on its free-to-air channels. Furthermore, Public Order Act prohibits public demonstrations in Singapore, making it almost impossible for people to protest against laws like these which they may disagree with.

The heavy regulation of the media has led to inaccurate portrayals of the LGBTQ community. The laws in place create an environment of self-censorship where the press refrains and are forced to refrain from talking about alternative sexual orientations for fear of repercussions from the government.

The consequences of these laws are multi-faceted. Firstly, it has developed a culture of self-censorship where journalists and editors refrain from even neutral reporting for fear of the possible repercussions that would ensue. Secondly, there has been very one sided and inaccurate portrayals of what it means to be gay or transgender. And for the people who already hold on to these perceptions, there is little chance or encouragement to change their understanding on these issues - many misinformed Singaporeans on social media have voiced their approval of 377A, likening homosexuality to pedophilia and bestiality. Instead, these



Pink Dot SG, the annual rally to support LGBT rights, June 2015 in Singapore. Photos by Lionel Ng via Getty

ideas are constantly reinforced with the present regulations and climate of reporting. Since the main argument against repealing is because society is not ready, how and when will society be ready when the information they are consuming constantly reinforces the opposite?

The media has also been guilty of reporting facts that could be seen to be misleading. For example, the Straits Times, the only English printed newspaper, published an article on a survey carried out by a market research firm. It discussed how 55 percent of the 750 Singaporean citizens and permanent residents surveyed still support 377A. The article opened with the line 'A little more than half of the people in Singapore - or 55 percent - still support Section 377A of the Penal Code, which criminalizes consensual sex between adult men'. In reality, 750 people translates to approximately 0.026 percent of the current demographic mentioned in the survey. Failing to mention this creates a false image of public opinion in Singapore.

In a weak defense of 377A, the government has said multiple times that though the law is in place, it is not one that will be enforced. However, its mere presence dictates that it is acceptable to label innocent individuals as criminals and perpetuate the negative stereotypes already rampant in society.

The media reported that when asked about 377A at a recent conference, the Minister of Education, Ong Ye Kung, claimed that people from the LGBTQ community live without discrimination at work, housing and education in Singapore. In reality, this is far from true and was not mentioned in reports.

In schools, gay teachers are discouraged from disclosing their sexuality. About 82 percent of the Singaporean population live in public housing in Singapore. It is the most affordable form of housing. Only married couples are allowed to purchase such forms of housing. Single people would have to wait till they turn 35 to be eligible to purchase such housing. Since civil partnerships are not recog-

nized, gay couples are not allowed to purchase such forms of housing until either person in the relationship turn 35. At which point the individual would have to purchase the apartment as a single person.

Sex education providers in schools are only allowed to 'teach students what homosexuality is and the current legal provisions' with the main message from sex education being 'abstinence before marriage is the best course of action for teenagers.'

**Since the main argument against repealing is because society isn't ready, how and when will society be ready when the information they are consuming constantly reinforces the opposite?**

Furthermore, the mere existence of the law prevents the implementation of anti-discrimination laws which are currently nonexistent with regards to the LGBTQ community in the country.

While the media is not the sole machine preventing the repeal of this archaic law, we can see the influence it has on framing perceptions and thoughts of the general public. And when this results in the discrimination of minority groups in society, efforts and resources should be allocated to effect change.

Even with opposition within the society, the government should have the primary responsibility to uphold and protect human rights. While achieving this can be difficult due to differing opinions and belief systems, efforts to educate should be made such that attitudes are changed, and acceptance cultivated. Censorship of the media to maintain the status quo is not the answer.



# Performative Violence, Media & Social Change: is the Black Bloc Tactic efficient?

Adrien Blanchard

**Performative violence and media have always had a special relationship: they need each other. On the one hand, the news coverage by mass media helps activists to gain visibility to make their political demands heard; on the other hand, media seeks to be fed by the potential newsworthiness of violent protests. The recent demonstrations in May 2018 throughout France in cities such as Paris, Nantes and Rennes, have perfectly highlighted this mutual bond.**

Elected one and a half years ago during the second round, opponent to the far-right, Emmanuel Macron governs extensively by ruling in order to accelerate the pace of the reforms, albeit being very contested. His various reforms on labour code, education, health systems, public services, plus his scornful reaction toward migrants and marginalized groups, are at the heart of the numerous demonstrations that happened during the spring of 2018, reuniting labourers, teachers, nurses and students. His neoliberal illiberal attitude (mixing neoliberal policies with strong police repression) is regularly denounced, for instance, by members of Black Blocs. Who fight back by using violence.

Black Bloc is a type of collective action, a tactic to conduct direct action through the anonymity ensured by their common dress code: black clothing and masks. Nonetheless, this tactic is not synonymous with violence, nor does it have the exclusivity of violence, and its members respect the diversity of protest tactics. From an anarchist tendency, Black Bloc works in a libertarian and egalitarian way and its members participate in broader activist work. Most of them also spread information about the anarchist theory and the justifications for the use of violence. From a political and economic point of view, violence is neither

senseless nor random but rather both the medium and the message of their political action. It is used to criticize capitalism and liberal state both directly (by attacking corporate branches and fighting with the police) and indirectly (thanks to the news coverage of the event making their political demands more visible and heard).

As planned, the spectacular and dramatic anarchist violence during the demonstrations in May 2018 have lured the eyes of the media which have extensively covered their actions, appealed by their newsworthiness. Unfortunately, mass media has also appropriated them for other ends. This bias can be explained thanks to the propaganda model created by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. This model is composed of five filters in which any information has to go through before being printed or broadcasted. The first one is connected to the concentration of ownership into wealthy hands of the huge and profit-seeking media companies; the second one exists because advertisement (and also state funding in the case of France) remains the most important source of income for mass media and therefore, companies in them can easily threaten them to withdraw ads and seriously affect them; the third one is the importance of official sources, namely governments, experts and business associations, providing an inherently conservative tone to the news while being considered impartial. Whereas 'alternative' figures (anarchists

**Black Bloc is a type of collective action, a tactic to conduct direct action through the anonymity ensured by their common dress code: black clothing and masks.**

for example) remain considered as unreliable; the fourth one is 'flak', the negative response (complaints, threat and punitive actions) to media productions in order to discipline them; and the fifth and last filter is the former 'anti-communist and fear' filter, which currently would be the 'evil dictator'/'war on terror'/'counterterrorism'. Thus, dominant media frames skilfully decontextualized and reinserted images of militant rebellion into a larger narrative of dreaded criminals, if not terrorists. Deviance, threatening to alienate and prevent the emergence of potential supporters and wrest legitimacy from the broader movement discrediting the anarchist political claim. Meanwhile, authorities take advantage of these images to build narratives that separate the peaceful majority (and so absorb their protestation) from the most violent minority. Allowing them to both justify brutal repression and prevent solidarity by being more clement to the most reformist (and so more containable) activists.

Performative violence is then a double-edged sword, a very tricky tactic. Actually, one may even wonder if, in these negative framing conditions which cause them to lose control over their representations, performative violence remains a relevant tactic for protesters to communicate.

As mentioned earlier, Black Bloc participants are most of the time also involved in various activist activities. Part of which occur on the Internet, through websites and social media, working as counter public relation to the interpretation of mass media. Thanks to this 'new' medium, performative violence works as a two-step communication. Step 1: mass media covers violent protests extensively, pushed by the spectacularity and newsworthiness nature of violence, but within a negative frame; Step 2: violent protesters coun-

terbalance this by channelling the audience to their website and their activism on social media. Thus, the criticism of mass media toward their act of violence and disruption is not necessarily problematic. The only condition being that the audience does further research than the mainstream media coverage. Although this strategy might sound risky, studies have shown that the audience on activist websites rise after violent protest. Plus, once the 'spectator' has learned about the existence of anarchist media, he/she is more prone to regularly challenge the mass media framing.

**Performative violence is then a double-edged sword, a very tricky tactic.**

Performative violence should not then be automatically disregarded and despised by other protesters/activists on the sole consideration that it will be framed negatively by mass media. It is understandable that most of the 'respectable movements' (according to mass media and the State) denounce the Black Bloc tactic to save their position as tolerated dissidents toward the State and mass media, but by doing so they reinforce the State and mass media power and thus weaken the chance to reach social change. If these 'respectable movements' claimed solidarity or at least did not condemn the Black Bloc tactic, it would jeopardize the legitimacy of the mass media's negative framing and would increase the efficiency of performative violence. Space for social change would thus be open.



May Day Protesters Clash With Police In Paris, May 2017 in Paris, France  
Photo by Julien Mattia/NurPhoto via Getty Images



# Freedom of expression

## in Decline

Activists take part in a demonstration to protest violence against women and in favor of the decriminalization of the abortion in Madrid, September 2017 in Madrid, Spain  
Photo by Jorge Sanz/Pacific Press/Lightrocket via Getty Images

**A king going on vacation with his mistress to kill elephants while his country is in its deepest recession, a former dictator buried in a monumental site where people gather to venerate him, the fascist anthem makes it to the top charts of the most listened songs in Spotify, an actor that "shits on the Virgin Mary" taken to trial. What do all these events have in common?**

They have happened in Spain. It's true, it sounds as if I invented all this stuff or that I was talking about a dictatorial country or the very fashionable topic of countries leaning towards authoritarianism, such as Poland or Hungary. But no, these all happened in the so-called Spanish democracy. So let's take a deeper look, shall we?

There are many examples of people being prosecuted because of facebook posts, songs, theater plays and tweets in Spain. We can start with one of the most recent examples, concerning the actor Willy Toledo who has recently been taken to court for a Facebook post he made last year in which he re-posted a picture of three women carrying a giant vagina simulating an Easter procession - a tradition to celebrate the assassination and resurrection of Jesus Christ - that was titled "Insubordinate Pussy" (Coño Insumiso). The actor attached the following description "I shit on God, and I have enough shit left over to shit on the dogma of the sanctity and virginity of the Virgin Mary. This country is unbearably shameful. I'm disgusted." He has been denounced by the Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers for "covering God and the Virgin

Mary with ridicule". It is important to mention that in Spain is incredibly common to use to shit on (someone/sth), including the virgin or Jesus Christ, as an expression. The "Insubordinate Pussy" procession itself is going to be put on trial as well in 2019.

Last year, the rapper Valtonec was sentenced to three and a half years of prison for distributing his songs online that were found to threaten a politician with violence, glorify terrorism and insult the crown. He managed to avoid prison by flying to Belgium thanks to people buying plane tickets in his name to different destinations, which impeded the rapper's tracing by the police. This September, a Belgian court ruled out extradition, allowing him to stay.

There are many other cases, such as a judge's decision to halt distribution of the book Fariña, about drug-trafficking in Galicia, or the case of the puppeteer theatre that was sentenced by a court for glorifying terrorism and promoting hatred. Although in their case, the charges were eventually dismissed.

Can you see a pattern? Claims against the monarchy, the system/terrorism and the catholic church. The Holy Trinity.

And even more, there is a law known as the "Gag Law" (Ley Mordaza) passed in November 2013 with the intention of suffocating the the "Indignados" movement, that arose after the 2008 crisis. This law penalizes with hefty fines things such as participation in unauthorized protest near institutions; filming the faces of police officers on the streets

(aimed at preventing filming during police brutality in demonstrations); disrupting public events such as public speeches, sport events or religious ceremonies; using Twitter, Facebook or Instagram to call on people to protest or to try to stop an eviction.

This has been recognised by Amnesty International in its annual report. The organization has criticised the use of legislation to stifle freedom of expression in Spain by prosecuting people on the grounds of 'glorification of terrorism' and 'humiliation of victims' on social media networks but that fall "within the permissible forms of expression under international human rights law". Such in the cases mentioned above and of Cassandra Vera and her twitter jokes about Carrillo Blanco.

The report also highlights the force used by the police during the Catalan referendum on the 1st of October 2017, as well as pointing out the political imprisonment of some of the people involved.

In this topic, it is interesting to point out the prohibition of wearing and putting yellow ribbons (the symbol demanding the freedom of the imprisoned politicians) in public spaces. The symbol was also forbidden in some cases during the Catalan election. Furthermore, the ribbons, together with the estelades (Catalan independence flag) and even just straight yellow t-shirts were forbidden during the final football match of the King's Cup.

This remarkably contrasts with the numerous events since the current government stated that it wanted to exhume the corpse of the dictator Francisco Franco, which is buried in a monumental Valley (Valle de los Caídos, The Valley of the Fallen) that can be actually visited. This led to a press release by retired military in August lauding Franco. As well as demonstrations in the same valley praising the dictator and opposing his exhumation. With people raising their hands to the sky and singing the fascist anthem "Cara al Sol", which is among the most listened songs on Spotify in Spain. But the fascist demonstrations are not a strange thing, they happen at least once per year on the 12th of October, the Spanish National Day (el Día de la Hispanidad). What is more, the Catholic Church has agreed to house the corpse of the dictator in the Almudena Cathedral, in central Madrid, where other Franco family members are buried.

The Francisco Franco Foundation, created in June 1977, published on its website on the 18th of July this year "Hoy, como en 1936, hace falta un movimiento revolucionario" (Today, like in 1936, there is the need for a revolutionary movement) alluding to the coup d'état carried out by Franco. The current new government is allegedly studying how to legalize it, but needs to change the law to do so.

These are on the fascist side (adding the prescription of several crimes during the dictatorship that have failed to be investigated), but we could also talk

about the refusal from the Parliament to discuss a corruption case related to the king (Corinna) on the grounds that "the Monarchy is not to be submitted to parliamentary control". The scandal regarding politicians fake university titles. The Gürtel case - a big corruption scandal involving the People's Party that led to the motion to dismiss the elected president Mariano Rajoy because of his involvement in the case. The little cooperation from the Catholic Church regarding children sexual abuse cases and its legal support. The rise of the far right party Vox, that just recently gathered almost 10,000 people in a pre-campaign meeting that is being covered by the media as a joke, just like how the media

**Can you see a pattern? "**  
**Claims against the monarchy,**  
**the system / terrorism**  
**and the catholic church.**

**The Holy Trinity.**

covered Trump. Many politicians, high ranking individuals and University researchers praising the discovery of America and the wonders of the Spanish Empire, like a gift to Humanity; the very last time by the People's Party new candidate to Presidency, and previously by the CEO of the national TV and radio channel (RTVE).

And the list goes on. So yes, let's just keep talking about the turn to authoritarianism of Hungary and Poland.

It is claimed there is a new stage of liberalism trending, that is one characterized by security which is highly connected to securitization of the state and its turn to illiberalism. However, in the case of Spain, these authoritarian inclinations are rather linked to its recent dictatorial past and the protection of such. That said, the current government seems committed to change these with measures such as the ones stated above but also by promising to remove the "solar tax" by the end of the year (a tax that since June this year clashes with EU Law) or promoting the extension of the paternal leave to eight weeks for 2019, obligatory and intransferable. The amount of time would progressively increase to 16 weeks in 2021. But we could also argue that Spain has not been alien to this and is also jumping into the securitization trend. This can be seen with the rising of the alt-right party Vox or the bigger focus on migration by the right wing parties in general as a response to the recent increment of migrant fluxes to Spain - even though to date only around 10 percent of the total population of Spain are of foreign origin.



# The Authoritarian Handbook

Shreeya Pillai

**The number of elections being held around the world has reached an all-time high. This might lead one to assume that democracy is also enjoying its heyday. But the reality is quite the opposite.**

In fact, it is not just a decline. It has become so pronounced that according to the Human Rights Foundation, about 3.97 billion people or 53 percent of the world's population living in 94 countries are currently living in non-democratic environments. The backsliding trend on democracy is being observed in more democratic regions of the world such as India and Turkey. According to data from the Varieties of Democracy Institute, for the first time in 2017, there are more consolidated authoritarian regimes than consolidated democracies. Furthermore this year, the number of countries backsliding on democracy was equal to the amount of countries that were making improvements. The last time this was observed was in 1979.

**“ Why question the people in power when that could lead to repercussions such as jail terms or worse, varied forms of violence? ”**

This is not a sudden dip into authoritarianism. The gradual decline of democratic governments, the wave of right-wing populism globally and the consequent authoritarian consolidation has been in progress for some time now – much like a frog boiling in water. If it is a gradual change, the frog does not attempt to jump out of the water. Civil society does not retaliate, and the international community does not react.

## So what?

What is at stake here? Multiple human rights especially those relevant to minorities are being taken away. Political opposition, civil society and inde-

pendent media have been choked off – but the grievances continue to be held by the people without an avenue to express their concerns. Diversity of identity and opinion within a society gives way to views that are constructed specifically by the people in power.

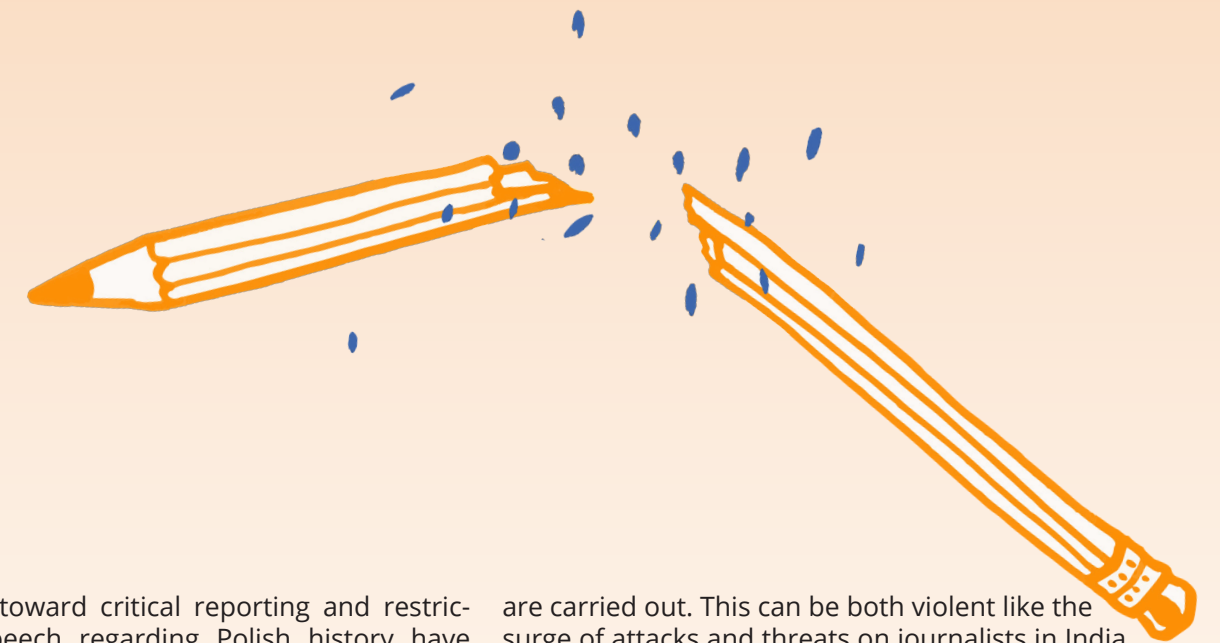
## The stages:

The often times populist party or candidate is democratically voted into power. Ironically, this is usually done after the party in question has taken advantage of the free press to effectively spread inaccurate and fake information to its electorate. This was observed multiple times in the run up to the US elections in 2016.

Once in power, the party then proceeds to dismantle the structures in place to secure absolute power. This is achieved by centralizing power in the executive. The separation between the judiciary and parliament is drastically reduced when the opposition voices are stifled and removed from parliament. This is followed by self-appointing replacements who are known for their willingness to comply with the people in power. This was observed in Turkey where since constitutional amendments were approved in 2017, 4000 judges and prosecutors have been removed and replaced with loyalist judges who only occasionally rule against the government. In this way, the first level of checks and balances are removed.

With these people holding prominent positions in the parliament, laws are passed without the fear of opposition. Certain rights that are essential to the proper functioning of a democracy are then slowly removed. This has also been observed in Poland where the right to peaceful protest is under threat with multiple reports of excessive use of force by the police in public demonstrations.

Another important way this is done is by controlling the media. This is achieved in two ways. New laws are first passed to restrict critical voices. Since the PiS (Law and Justice) party gained a majority in the Polish parliament in 2015, the government has been cracking down on press freedom. It took control of the Polish public broadcaster and is now aiming at foreign owned media companies. Their



intolerance toward critical reporting and restrictions on speech regarding Polish history have created a climate of self-censorship and polarization. A feat easy to achieve since they would already have the power of the courts on their side.

**“ While elections are important for democracies, it is the media that plays the integral role of information dissemination to the electorate ”**

Heads of the various media agencies would be appointed by the government to ensure the essence of the laws, such as the restrictions in media coverage, and the consequent penalties, such as jail terms, are carried out in practice. For example, as of January this year, there are 245 jailed journalists in Turkey. This step would further cement and cultivate the culture of fear and self-censorship which prevents the media from exercising its key role – to act as a form of check and balance on the people in power. News is curated such that governments are able to create and shape public opinions and perceptions of its citizens. The summation of all these changes would in turn ensure the party's illegitimate power in the long run.

Interestingly, practices like these are already a common place in established authoritarian regimes. China which has one of the most restrictive media environments in the world, exercises control over news reporting via direct ownership of the media outlets and have harsh penalties for criticism of the actions of the country's ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

## The role of the media:

Proud pronouncements of plans to censor the media and journalists are hardly ever made. It is usually a quiet, conspicuous and insidious process where inducements, intimidations and co-optation

are carried out. This can be both violent like the surge of attacks and threats on journalists in India and non-violent like the laws that are being passed in states around the world. Tactics like these create a climate of fear which in turn leads to higher levels of self-censorship. Why question the people in power when that could lead to repercussions such as jail terms or worse, varied forms of violence?

Freedom of speech and access to varied sources of information are key components that are essential to the proper functioning of an electoral democracy. Failing to maintain these aspects would place elections on the brink of becoming a mere façade.

Furthermore, these changes do not happen to countries in isolation. Many states have emulated their neighbors who are also jumping on the authoritarian bandwagon. For example, leaders in Poland and Hungary have constantly encouraged and supported the changes that have been made in both countries. A group of far-right leaders from European states such as France, The Netherlands and Germany met in Germany last year in what they termed a 'counter-summit'.

## The future:

What happens when media freedom is successfully undermined? Can we pull ourselves out of it? It would be an immensely steep uphill battle, one that we will hopefully witness in the near future. Civil society would have to wrestle with the newly and deeply entrenched power.

While elections are important for democracies, it is the media that plays the integral role of information dissemination to the electorate. It also plays an important role in framing perceptions, which cannot be underestimated. We've seen how when absolute power to control is exercised in the absence of checks and balances, democracy stands to spiral out of control. While each individual step might seem insignificant, the gradual removal of multiple rights and freedoms hinder the electoral process from being meaningful and truly democratic.





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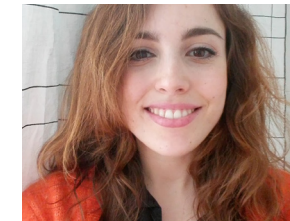


Utrikespolitiska  
föreningen  
Göteborg

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Moa Persson**  
Legally responsible publisher  
Editor in chief  
[moa.persson@utblick.org](mailto:moa.persson@utblick.org)



**Ariadna Carrascosa**  
Editor in chief  
[ariadna.carrascosa@utblick.org](mailto:ariadna.carrascosa@utblick.org)



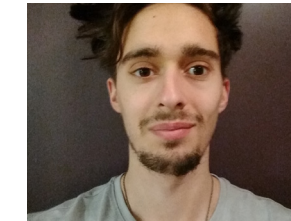
**Lewis Day**  
Writer  
Proof reader  
[day.lewisc@gmail.com](mailto:day.lewisc@gmail.com)



**Daniel Mckenna**  
Writer  
[danielmckenna161@gmail.com](mailto:danielmckenna161@gmail.com)



**Emma Smedberg**  
Writer  
[emma\\_smedberg@hotmail.com](mailto:emma_smedberg@hotmail.com)



**Maximilian Weik**  
Writer  
[maxweik@hotmail.com](mailto:maxweik@hotmail.com)



**Shreeya Pillai**  
Writer  
[shreeyapillai@gmail.com](mailto:shreeyapillai@gmail.com)



**Toni-Marie Cornwall**  
Writer  
[toni\\_cornwall@yahoo.com](mailto:toni_cornwall@yahoo.com)



**Adrien Blanchard**  
Writer  
[adrien.blanchard@protonmail.com](mailto:adrien.blanchard@protonmail.com)



**Chloé Lhote-Bérogen**  
Writer  
[chloe.lhote@gmail.com](mailto:chloe.lhote@gmail.com)



**Emma Hansson**  
Graphic designer  
Illustrator  
[emmahansson@ymail.com](mailto:emmahansson@ymail.com)

The Society of International Affairs Gothenburg is a non-governmental organization with the ambition to spread knowledge and spark discussion about foreign policy issues. We organize lectures and trips, host movie screenings and publish the magazine Utblick. A one-year membership is 50 sek and everyone can join.



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## UF Göteborg Model United Nations



The poster features a central circular emblem with the text "UTRIKESPOLITISKA FÖRENINGEN" and "1925" surrounded by a laurel wreath. Below the emblem is a silhouette of a city skyline. The poster is decorated with portraits of diverse students and speech bubbles containing flags from various countries including Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland, Brazil, China, and Germany. A central white circle contains the text: "Are you interested in... United Nations? International issues? International relations? Debating skills? Leadership?"

Are you interested in...  
United Nations?  
International issues?  
International relations?  
Debating skills?  
Leadership?

### ① Contact us by email or FB !!

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### ② Come to our Weekly Meeting♥

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